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A
SERIES OF PLAYS.

VOL. I.

REVUE DE L'ÉCONOMIQUE

Vol. I.

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A

SERIES OF PLAYS:

IN WHICH

IT IS ATTEMPTED TO DELINEATE

THE

STRONGER PASSIONS OF THE MIND :

EACH PASSION

BEING THE

SUBJECT OF A TRAGEDY AND A COMEDY.

BY

JOANNA BAILLIE.

A NEW EDITION.

VOL. I.

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INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

It is natural for a writer, who is about to submit his works to the Public, to feel a strong inclination, by some Preliminary Address, to conciliate the favour of his reader, and dispose him, if possible, to peruse them with a favourable eye. I am well aware, however, that his endeavours are generally fruitless: in his situation our hearts revolt from all appearance of confidence, and we consider his diffidence as hypocrisy. Our own word is frequently taken for what we say of ourselves, but very rarely for what we say of our works. Were the three plays which this small volume contains, detached pieces only, and unconnected with others that do not yet appear, I should have suppressed this inclination altogether; and have allowed my reader to begin what is before him, and to form what opinion of it his taste or his humour might direct, without any previous trespass upon his time or his patience. But they are part of an extensive design: of one which, as far as my information goes, has nothing exactly similar to it in any language; of one which a whole life's time will be limited enough to accomplish; and which has, therefore, a considerable chance of being cut short by that hand which nothing can resist.

Before I explain the plan of this work, I must make a demand upon the patience of my reader, whilst I endeavour to communicate to him those ideas regarding human nature, as they in some degree affect almost every species of moral writings, but particularly the Dramatic, that induced me to attempt it; and, as far as my judgment enabled me to apply them, has directed me in the execution of it.

From that strong sympathy which most creatures, but the human above all, feel for others of their kind, nothing has become so much an object of man's curiosity as man himself. We are all conscious of this within ourselves, and so constantly do we meet with it in others, that, like every circumstance of continually repeated occurrence, it thereby escapes observation. Every person who is not deficient in intellect, is more or less occupied in tracing amongst the individuals he converses with, the varieties of understanding and temper which constitute the characters of men; and receives great pleasure from every stroke of nature that points out to him those varieties. This is, much more than we are aware of, the occupation of children, and of grown people also, whose penetration is but lightly esteemed; and that conversation which degenerates with them into trivial and mischievous tattling, takes its rise not unfrequently from the same source that supplies the rich vein of the satirist and the wit. That eagerness so universally shown for

the conversation of the latter, plainly enough indicates how many people have been occupied in the same way with themselves. Let any one, in a large company, do or say what is strongly expressive of his peculiar character, or of some passion or humour of the moment, and it will be detected by almost every person present. How often may we see a very stupid countenance animated with a smile, when the learned and the wise have betrayed some native feature of their own minds! and how often will this be the case when they have supposed it to be concealed under a very sufficient disguise! From this constant employment of their minds, most people, I believe, without being conscious of it, have stored up in idea the greater part of those strong marked varieties of human character, which may be said to divide it into classes; and in one of those classes they involuntarily place every new person they become acquainted with.

I will readily allow that the dress and the manners of men, rather than their characters and dispositions, are the subjects of our common conversation, and seem chiefly to occupy the multitude. But let it be remembered that it is much easier to express our observations upon these. It is easier to communicate to another how a man wears his wig and cane, what kind of house he inhabits, and what kind of table he keeps, than from what slight traits in his words and actions we have been led to

conceive certain impressions of his character : traits that will often escape the memory, when the opinions that were founded upon them remain. Besides, in communicating our ideas of the characters of others, we are often called upon to support them with more expense of reasoning than we can well afford ; but our observations on the dress and appearance of men seldom involve us in such difficulties. For these, and other reasons too tedious to mention, the generality of people appear to us more trifling than they are : and I may venture to say, that, but for this sympathetic curiosity towards others of our kind which is so strongly implanted within us, the attention we pay to the dress and manners of men would dwindle into an employment as insipid, as examining the varieties of plants and minerals, is to one who understands not natural history.

In our ordinary intercourse with society, this sympathetic propensity of our minds is exercised upon men under the common occurrences of life, in which we have often observed them. Here, vanity and weakness put themselves forward to view, more conspicuously than the virtues ; here, men encounter those smaller trials, from which they are not apt to come off victorious ; and here, consequently, that which is marked with the whimsical and ludicrous will strike us most forcibly, and make the strongest impression on our memory. To this sympathetic propensity of our minds, so

exercised, the genuine and pure comic of every composition, whether drama, fable, story, or satire, is addressed.

If man is an object of so much attention to man, engaged in the ordinary occurrences of life, how much more does he excite his curiosity and interest when placed in extraordinary situations of difficulty and distress? It cannot be any pleasure we receive from the sufferings of a fellow-creature which attracts such multitudes of people to a public execution, though it is the horror we conceive for such a spectacle that keeps so many more away. To see a human being bearing himself up under such circumstances, or struggling with the terrible apprehensions which such a situation impresses, must be the powerful incentive, that makes us press forward to behold what we shrink from, and wait with trembling expectation for what we dread.* For though few at such a spectacle can get near enough to distinguish the expression of face, or the minuter parts of a criminal's behaviour, yet from a considerable distance will they eagerly mark

* In confirmation of this opinion I may venture to say, that of the great numbers who go to see a public execution, there are but very few who would not run away from, and avoid it, if they happened to meet with it unexpectedly. We find people stopping to look at a procession, or any other uncommon sight, they may have fallen in with accidentally, but almost never an execution. No one goes there who has not made up his mind for the occasion; which would not be the case, if any natural love of cruelty were the cause of such assemblies.

whether he steps firmly ; whether the motions of his body denote agitation or calmness ; and if the wind does but ruffle his garment, they will, even from that change upon the outline of his distant figure, read some expression connected with his dreadful situation. Though there is a greater proportion of people in whom this strong curiosity will be overcome by other dispositions and motives ; though there are many more who will stay away from such a sight than will go to it ; yet there are very few who will not be eager to converse with a person who has beheld it ; and to learn, very minutely, every circumstance connected with it, except the very act itself of inflicting death. To lift up the roof of his dungeon, like the *Diable boiteux*, and look upon a criminal the night before he suffers, in his still hours of privacy, when all that disguise is removed which is imposed by respect for the opinion of others, the strong motive by which even the lowest and wickedest of men still continue to be actuated, would present an object to the mind of every person, not withheld from it by great timidity of character, more powerfully attractive than almost any other.

Revenge, no doubt, first began amongst the savages of America, that dreadful custom of sacrificing their prisoners of war. But the perpetration of such hideous cruelty could never have become a permanent national custom, but for this universal desire in the human mind to behold man in every

situation, putting forth his strength against the current of adversity, scorning all bodily anguish, or struggling with those feelings of nature which, like a beating stream, will oftentimes burst through the artificial barriers of pride. Before they begin those terrible rites they treat their prisoners kindly ; and it cannot be supposed that men, alternately enemies and friends to so many neighbouring tribes, in manners and appearance like themselves, should so strongly be actuated by a spirit of public revenge. This custom, therefore, must be considered as a grand and terrible game, which every tribe plays against another ; where they try not the strength of the arm, the swiftness of the feet, nor the acuteness of the eye, but the fortitude of the soul. Considered in this light, the excess of cruelty exercised upon their miserable victim, in which every hand is described as ready to inflict its portion of pain, and every head ingenious in the contrivance of it, is no longer to be wondered at. To put into his measure of misery one agony less, would be, in some degree, betraying the honour of their nation, would be doing a species of injustice to every hero of their own tribe who had already sustained it, and to those who might be called upon to do so ; amongst whom each of these savage tormentors has his chance of being one, and has prepared himself for it from his childhood. Nay, it would be a species of injustice to the haughty victim himself, who would

scorn to purchase his place amongst the heroes of his nation, at an easier price than his undaunted predecessors.

Amongst the many trials to which the human mind is subjected, that of holding intercourse, real or imaginary, with the world of spirits : of finding itself alone with a being terrific and awful, whose nature and power are unknown, has been justly considered as one of the most severe. The workings of nature in this situation, we all know, have ever been the object of our most eager inquiry. No man wishes to see the Ghost himself, which would certainly procure him the best information on the subject, but every man wishes to see one who believes that he sees it, in all the agitation and wildness of that species of terror. To gratify this curiosity how many people have dressed up hideous apparitions to frighten the timid and superstitious! and have done it at the risk of destroying their happiness or understanding for ever. For the instances of intellect being destroyed by this kind of trial are more numerous, perhaps, in proportion to the few who have undergone it, than by any other.

How sensible are we of this strong propensity within us, when we behold any person under the pressure of great and uncommon calamity! Delicacy and respect for the afflicted will, indeed, make us turn ourselves aside from observing him, and cast down our eyes in his presence ; but the first glance we direct to him will involuntarily be one

of the keenest observation, how hastily soever it may be checked; and often will a returning look of inquiry mix itself by stealth with our sympathy and reserve.

But it is not in situations of difficulty and distress alone, that man becomes the object of this sympathetic curiosity: he is no less so when the evil he contends with arises in his own breast, and no outward circumstance connected with him either awakens our attention or our pity. What human creature is there, who can behold a being like himself under the violent agitation of those passions which all have, in some degree, experienced, without feeling himself most powerfully excited by the sight? I say, all have experienced: for the bravest man on earth knows what fear is as well as the coward; and will not refuse to be interested for one under the dominion of this passion, provided there be nothing in the circumstances attending it to create contempt. Anger is a passion that attracts less sympathy than any other, yet the unpleasing and distorted features of an angry man will be more eagerly gazed upon by those who are no wise concerned with his fury or the objects of it, than the most amiable placid countenance in the world. Every eye is directed to him; every voice hushed to silence in his presence: even children will leave off their gambols as he passes, and gaze after him more eagerly than the gaudiest equipage.

The wild tossings of despair ; the gnashing of hatred and revenge ; the yearnings of affection, and the softened mien of love ; all the language of the agitated soul, which every age and nation understand, is never addressed to the dull or inattentive.

It is not merely under the violent agitations of passion, that man so rouses and interests us ; even the smallest indications of an unquiet mind, the restless eye, the muttering lip, the half-checked exclamation, and the hasty start, will set our attention as anxiously upon the watch, as the first distant flashes of a gathering storm. When some great explosion of passion bursts forth, and some consequent catastrophe happens, if we are at all acquainted with the unhappy perpetrator, how minutely shall we endeavour to remember every circumstance of his past behaviour ! and with what avidity shall we seize upon every recollected word or gesture, that is in the smallest degree indicative of the supposed state of his mind, at the time when they took place. If we are not acquainted with him, how eagerly shall we listen to similar recollections from another ! Let us understand, from observation or report, that any person harbours in his breast, concealed from the world's eye, some powerful rankling passion of what kind soever it may be, we shall observe every word, every motion, every look, even the distant gait of such a man, with a constancy and attention bestowed upon no

other. Nay, should we meet him unexpectedly on our way, a feeling will pass across our minds as though we found ourselves in the neighbourhood of some secret and fearful thing. If invisible, would we not follow him into his lonely haunts, into his closet, into the midnight silence of his chamber? There is, perhaps, no employment which the human mind will with so much avidity pursue, as the discovery of concealed passion, as the tracing the varieties and progress of a perturbed soul.

It is to this sympathetic curiosity of our nature, exercised upon mankind in great and trying occasions, and under the influence of the stronger passions, when the grand, the generous, and the terrible attract our attention far more than the base and depraved, that the high and powerfully tragic, of every composition, is addressed.

This propensity is universal. Children begin to show it very early; it enters into many of their amusements, and that part of them too, for which they show the keenest relish. It oftentimes tempts them, as well as the mature in years, to be guilty of tricks, vexations, and cruelty; yet GOD ALMIGHTY has implanted it within us, as well as all our other propensities and passions, for wise and good purposes. It is our best and most powerful instructor. From it we are taught the proprieties and decencies of ordinary life, and are prepared for distressing and difficult situations. In examining others

we know ourselves. With limbs untorn, with head unsmitten, with senses unimpaired by despair, we know what we ourselves might have been on the rack, on the scaffold, and in the most afflicting circumstances of distress. Unless when accompanied with passions of the dark and malevolent kind, we cannot well exercise this disposition without becoming more just, more merciful, more compassionate; and as the dark and malevolent passions are not the predominant inmates of the human breast, it hath produced more deeds — O many more! of kindness than of cruelty. It holds up for our example a standard of excellence, which, without its assistance, our inward consciousness of what is right and becoming might never have dictated. It teaches us, also, to respect ourselves, and our kind; for it is a poor mind, indeed, that from this employment of its faculties, learns not to dwell upon the noble view of human nature rather than the mean.

Universal, however, as this disposition undoubtedly is, with the generality of mankind it occupies itself in a passing and superficial way. Though a native trait of character or of passion is obvious to them as well as to the sage, yet to their minds it is but the visitor of a moment; they look upon it singly and unconnected: and though this disposition, even so exercised, brings instruction as well as amusement, it is chiefly by storing up in their

minds those ideas to which the instructions of others refer, that it can be eminently useful. Those who reflect and reason upon what human nature holds out to their observation, are comparatively but few. No stroke of nature which engages their attention stands insulated and alone. Each presents itself to them with many varied connections; and they comprehend not merely the immediate feeling which gave rise to it, but the relation of that feeling to others which are concealed. We wonder at the changes and caprices of men; they see in them nothing but what is natural and accountable. We stare upon some dark catastrophe of passion, as the Indians did upon an eclipse of the moon; they, conceiving the track of ideas through which the impassioned mind has passed, regard it like the philosopher who foretold the phenomenon. Knowing what situation of life he is about to be thrown into, they perceive in the man, who, like Hazael, says, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" the foul and ferocious murderer. A man of this contemplative character partakes, in some degree, of the entertainment of the Gods, who were supposed to look down upon this world and the inhabitants of it, as we do upon a theatrical exhibition; and if he is of a benevolent disposition, a good man struggling with, and triumphing over adversity, will be to him, also, the most delightful spectacle. But though this eagerness to observe

their fellow-creatures in every situation, leads not the generality of mankind to reason and reflect; and those strokes of nature which they are so ready to remark, stand single and unconnected in their minds, yet they may be easily induced to do both; and there is no mode of instruction which they will so eagerly pursue, as that which lays open before them, in a more enlarged and connected view than their individual observations are capable of supplying — the varieties of the human mind. Above all, to be well exercised in this study will fit a man more particularly for the most important situations of life. He will prove for it the better Judge, the better Magistrate, the better Advocate; and as a ruler or conductor of other men, under every occurring circumstance, he will find himself the better enabled to fulfil his duty, and accomplish his designs. He will perceive the natural effect of every order that he issues upon the minds of his soldiers, his subjects, or his followers: and he will deal to others judgment tempered with mercy; that is to say, truly just; for justice appears to us severe only when it is imperfect.

In proportion as moral writers of every class have exercised within themselves this sympathetic propensity of our nature, and have attended to it in others, their works have been interesting and instructive. They have struck the imagination more forcibly, convinced the understanding more clearly,

and more lastingly impressed the memory. If unseasoned with any reference to this, the fairy bowers of the poet, with all his gay images of delight, will be admired and forgotten; the important relations of the historian, and even the reasonings of the philosopher, will make a less permanent impression.

The historian points back to the men of other ages, and from the gradually clearing mist in which they are first discovered, like the mountains of a far distant land, the generations of the world are displayed to our mind's eye in grand and regular procession. But the transactions of men become interesting to us only as we are made acquainted with men themselves. Great and bloody battles are to us battles fought in the moon, if it is not impressed upon our minds, by some circumstances attending them, that men subject to like weaknesses and passions with ourselves, were the combatants.* The establish-

* Let two great battles be described to us with all the force and clearness of the most able pen. In the first let the most admirable exertions of military skill in the General, and the most unshaken courage in the soldiers, gain over an equal or superior number of brave opponents a complete and glorious victory. In the second let the General be less scientific, and the soldiers less dauntless. Let them go into the field for a cause that is dear to them, and fight with the ardour which such a motive inspires; till discouraged with the many deaths around them, and the renovated pressure of the foe, some unlooked-for circumstance, trifling in itself, strikes their imagination at once; they are visited with the terrors of nature: their national pride, the honour of soldiery is forgotten;

ments of policy make little impression upon us, if we are left ignorant of the beings whom they affected. Even a very masterly drawn character will but slightly imprint upon our memory the great man it belongs to, if, in the account we receive of his life, those lesser circumstances are entirely neglected, which do best of all point out to us the dispositions and tempers of men. Some slight circumstance characteristic of the particular turn of a man's mind, which at first sight seems but little connected with the great events of his life, will often explain some of those events more clearly to our understanding, than the minute details of ostensible policy. A judicious selection of those circumstances which characterize the spirit of an associated mob, paltry and ludicrous as some

they fly like a fearful flock. Let some beloved chief then step forth, and call upon them by the love of their country, by the memory of their valiant fathers, by every thing that kindles in the bosom of man the high and generous passions : they stop ; they gather round him ; and goaded by shame and indignation, returning again to the charge, with the fury of wild beasts rather than the courage of soldiers, bear down every thing before them. Which of these two battles will interest us the most ? And which of them shall we remember the longest ? The one will stand forth in the imagination of the reader like a rock of the desert, which points out to the far-removed traveller the country through which he has passed, when its lesser objects are obscured in the distance ; whilst the other leaves no traces behind it, but in the minds of the scientific in war.

of them may appear, will oftentimes convey to our minds a clearer idea why certain laws and privileges were demanded and agreed to, than a methodical explanation of their causes. An historian who has examined human nature himself, and likewise attends to the pleasure which developing and tracing it does ever convey to others, will employ our understanding as well as our memory with his pages; and if this is not done, he will impose upon the latter a very difficult task, in retaining what she is concerned with alone.

In argumentative and philosophical writings, the effect which the author's reasoning produces on our minds, depends not entirely on the justness of it. The images and examples that he calls to his aid to explain and illustrate his meaning, will very much affect the attention we are able to bestow upon it, and consequently the quickness with which we shall apprehend, and the force with which it will impress us. These are selected from animated and unanimated nature, from the habits, manners, and characters of men; and though that image or example, whatever it may be in itself, which brings out his meaning most clearly, ought to be preferred before every other, yet of two equal in this respect, that which is drawn from the most interesting source will please us the most at the time, and most lastingly take hold of our minds. An argument supported with vivid and interesting illus-

tration will long be remembered, when many equally important and clear are forgotten ; and a work where many such occur, will be held in higher estimation by the generality of men, than one, its superiour, perhaps, in acuteness, perspicuity, and good sense.

Our desire to know what men are in the closet as well as in the field, by the blazing hearth and at the social board, as well as in the council and the throne, is very imperfectly gratified by real history ; romance writers, therefore, stepped boldly forth to supply the deficiency ; and tale writers and novel writers, of many descriptions, followed after. If they have not been very skilful in their delineations of nature ; if they have represented men and women speaking and acting as men and women never did speak or act ; if they have caricatured both our virtues and our vices ; if they have given us such pure and unmixed, or such heterogeneous combinations of character, as real life never presented, and yet have pleased and interested us ; let it not be imputed to the dulness of man in discerning what is genuinely natural in himself. There are many inclinations belonging to us besides this great master-propensity of which I am treating. Our love of the grand, the beautiful, the novel, and, above all, of the marvellous, is very strong ; and if we are richly fed with what we have a good relish for, we may be weaned to forget our native and

favourite aliment. Yet we can never so far forget it, but that we shall cling to, and acknowledge it again, whenever it is presented before us. In a work abounding with the marvellous and unnatural, if the author has any how stumbled upon an unsophisticated genuine stroke of nature, we shall immediately perceive and be delighted with it, though we are foolish enough to admire, at the same time, all the nonsense with which it is surrounded. After all the wonderful incidents, dark mysteries, and secrets revealed, which eventful novel so liberally presents to us; after the beautiful fairy ground, and even the grand and sublime scenes of nature with which descriptive novel so often enchants us; those works which most strongly characterise human nature in the middling and lower classes of society, where it is to be discovered by stronger and more unequivocal marks, will ever be the most popular. For though great pains have been taken in our higher sentimental novels to interest us in the delicacies, embarrassments, and artificial distresses of the more refined part of society, they have never been able to cope in the public opinion with these. The one is a dressed and beautiful pleasure-ground, in which we are enchanted for a while, amongst the delicate and unknown plants of artful cultivation: the other is a rough forest of our native land; the oak, the elm, the hazel, and the bramble are there; and

amidst the endless varieties of its paths we can wander for ever. Into whatever scenes the novelist may conduct us, what objects soever he may present to our view, still is our attention most sensibly awake to every touch faithful to nature; still are we upon the watch for every thing that speaks to us of ourselves.

The fair field of what is properly called poetry, is enriched with so many beauties, that in it we are often tempted to forget what we really are, and what kind of beings we belong to. Who, in the enchanted regions of simile, metaphor, allegory, and description, can remember the plain order of things in this everyday world? From heroes, whose majestick forms rise like a lofty tower, whose eyes are lightning, whose arms are irresistible, whose course is like the storms of heaven, bold and exalted sentiments we shall readily receive; and shall not examine them very accurately by that rule of nature which our own breast prescribes to us. A shepherd, whose sheep, with fleeces of purest snow, browse the flowery herbage of the most beautiful valleys; whose flute is ever melodious, and whose shepherdess is ever crowned with roses; whose every care is love, will not be called very strictly to account for the loftiness and refinement of his thoughts. The fair Nymph who sighs out her sorrows to the conscious and compassionate wilds; whose eyes gleam like the bright drops of heaven;

whose loose tresses stream to the breeze, may say what she pleases with impunity. I will venture, however, to say, that amidst all this decoration and ornament, all this loftiness and refinement, let one simple trait of the human heart, one expression of passion, genuine and true to nature, be introduced, and it will stand forth alone in the boldness of reality, whilst the false and unnatural around it fade away upon every side, like the rising exhalations of the morning. With admiration, and often with enthusiasm, we proceed on our way through the grand and the beautiful images, raised to our imagination by the lofty epick muse: but what, even here, are those things that strike upon the heart; that we feel and remember? Neither the descriptions of war, the sound of the trumpet, the clanging of arms, the combat of heroes, nor the death of the mighty, will interest our minds like the fall of the feeble stranger, who simply expresses the anguish of his soul, at the thoughts of that far distant home which he must never return to again, and closes his eyes amongst the ignoble and forgotten; like the timid stripling goaded by the shame of reproach, who urges his trembling steps to the fight, and falls like a tender flower before the first blast of winter. How often will some simple picture of this kind be all that remains upon our minds of the terrific and magnificent battle, whose description we have read with admiration? How comes it that we relish

so much the episodes of an heroick poem? It cannot merely be that we are pleased with a resting-place, where we enjoy the variety of contrast; for were the poem of the simple and familiar kind, and an episode after the heroick style introduced into it, ninety readers out of a hundred would pass over it altogether. It is not that we meet such a story, so situated, with a kind of sympathetick good will, as in passing through a country of castles and of palaces, we should pop unawares upon some humble cottage, resembling the dwellings of our own native land, and gaze upon it with affection. The highest pleasures we receive from poetry, as well as from the real objects which surround us in the world, are derived from the sympathetick interest we all take in beings like ourselves: and I will even venture to say, that were the grandest scenes which can enter into the imagination of man, presented to our view, and all reference to man completely shut out from our thoughts, the objects that composed it would convey to our minds little better than dry ideas of magnitude, colour, and form; and the remembrance of them would rest upon our minds like the measurement and distances of the planets.

If the study of human nature, then, is so useful to the poet, the novelist, the historian, and the philosopher, of how much greater importance must it be to the dramattick writer? To them it is a power-

ful auxiliary, to him it is the centre and strength of the battle. If characteristick views of human nature enliven not their pages, there are many excellencies with which they can, in some degree, make up for the deficiency: it is what we receive from them with pleasure rather than demand. But in his works, no richness of invention, harmony of language, nor grandeur of sentiment, will supply the place of faithfully delineated nature. The poet and the novelist may represent to you their great characters, from the cradle to the tomb. They may represent them in any mood or temper, and under the influence of any passion which they see proper, without being obliged to put words into their mouths, those great betrayers of the feigned and adopted. They may relate every circumstance, however trifling and minute, that serves to developpe their tempers and dispositions. They tell us what kind of people they intend their men and women to be, and as such we receive them. If they are to move us with any scene of distress, every circumstance regarding the parties concerned in it, how they looked, how they moved, how they sighed, how the tears gushed from their eyes, how the very light and shadow fell upon them, is carefully described; and the few things that are given them to say along with all this assistance, must be very unnatural indeed if we refuse to sympathize with them. But the characters of the drama must speak directly

for themselves. Under the influence of every passion, humour, and impression ; in the artificial veilings of hypocrisy and ceremony, in the openness of freedom and confidence, and in the lonely hour of meditation, they speak. He who made us hath placed within our breasts a judge that judges instantaneously of every thing they say. We expect to find them creatures like ourselves ; and if they are untrue to nature, we feel that we are imposed upon.

As in other works deficiency in characteristick truth may be compensated by excellencies of a different kind ; in the drama, characteristick truth will compensate every other defect. Nay, it will do what appears a contradiction ; one strong genuine stroke of nature will cover a multitude of sins, even against nature herself. When we meet in some scene of a good play a very fine stroke of this kind, we are apt to become so intoxicated with it, and so perfectly convinced of the author's great knowledge of the human heart, that we are unwilling to suppose the whole of it has not been suggested by the same penetrating spirit. Many well-meaning enthusiastick criticks have given themselves a great deal of trouble in this way ; and have shut their eyes most ingeniously against the fair light of nature for the very love of it. They have converted, in their great zeal, sentiments palpably false, both in regard to the character and situation of the per-

sons who utter them, sentiments which a child or a clown would detect, into the most skilful depictrments of the heart. I can think of no stronger instance to show how powerfully this love of nature dwells within us.*

Formed as we are with these sympathetick propensities in regard to our own species, it is not at all wonderful that theatrical exhibition has become the grand and favourite amusement of every nation into which it has been introduced. Savages will, in the wild contortions of a dance, shape out some rude story expressive of character or passion, and such a dance will give more delight to their companions than the most artful exertions of agility. Children in their gambols will make out a mimick representation of the manners, characters, and passions of grown men and women; and such a pastime will animate and delight them much more than a treat of the daintiest sweetmeats, or the handling of the gaudiest toys. Eagerly as it is enjoyed by the rude

* It appears to me a very strong testimony of the excellence of our great national Dramatist, that so many people have been employed in finding out obscure and refined beauties, in what appear to ordinary observation his very defects. Men, it may be said, do so merely to show their own superior penetration and ingenuity. But granting this; what could make other men listen to them, and listen so greedily too, if it were not that they have received, from the works of Shakspeare, pleasure far beyond what the most perfect poetical compositions of a different character can afford?

and the young, to the polished and the ripe in years, it is still the most interesting amusement. Our taste for it is durable as it is universal. Independently of those circumstances which first introduced it, the world would not have long been without it. The progress of society would soon have brought it forth; and men, in the whimsical decorations of fancy, would have displayed the characters and actions of their heroes, the folly and absurdity of their fellow-citizens, had no Priest of Bacchus ever existed.*

* Though the progress of society would have given us the Drama, independently of the particular cause of its first commencement, the peculiar circumstances connected with its origin have had considerable influence upon its character and style, in the ages through which it has passed even to our day, and still will continue to affect it. Homer had long preceded the dramatick poets of Greece; poetry was in a high state of cultivation when they began to write; and their style, the construction of their pieces, and the characters of their heroes were different from what they would have been, had theatrical exhibitions been the invention of an earlier age or a ruder people. Their works were represented to an audience, already accustomed to hear long poems rehearsed at their public games, and the feasts of their gods. A play, with the principal characters of which they were previously acquainted; in which their great men and heroes, in the most beautiful language, complained of their rigorous fate, but piously submitted to the will of the gods; in which sympathy was chiefly excited by tender and affecting sentiments; in which strong bursts of passion were few; and in which whole scenes frequently passed, without giving the actors any thing to do but to speak, was not too insipid for them. Had the drama been the invention of a less cultivated

In whatever age or country the Drama might have taken its rise, Tragedy would have been the first-born of its children. For every nation has its great men, and its great events upon record; and to represent their own forefathers struggling with those difficulties, and braving those dangers, of which they have heard with admiration, and the effects of which they still, perhaps, experience, would certainly have been the most animating subject for the poet, and the most in-

nation, more of action and of passion would have been introduced into it. It would have been more irregular, more imperfect, more varied, more interesting. From poor beginnings it would have advanced in a progressive state: and succeeding poets, not having those polished and admired originals to look back upon, would have presented their respective contemporaries with the produce of a free and unbridled imagination. A different class of poets would most likely have been called into existence. The latent powers of men are called forth by contemplating those works in which they find any thing congenial to their own peculiar talents; and if the field wherein they could have worked, is already enriched with a produce unsuited to their cultivation, they think not of entering it at all. Men, therefore, whose natural turn of mind led them to labour, to reason, to refine, and exalt, have caught their animation from the beauties of the Grecian Drama; and they who, perhaps, ought only to have been our Criticks, have become our Poets. I mean not, however, in any degree to depreciate the works of the ancients: a great deal we have gained by those beautiful compositions; and what we have lost by them it is impossible to compute. Very strong genius will sometimes break through every disadvantage of circumstances: Shakspeare has arisen in this country, and we ought not to complain.

teresting for his audience, even independently of the natural inclination we all so universally show for scenes of horror and distress, of passion and heroic exertion. Tragedy would have been the first child of the Drama, for the same reasons that have made heroick ballad, with all its battles, murders, and disasters, the earliest poetical compositions of every country.

We behold heroes and great men at a distance, unmarked by those small but distinguishing features of the mind, which give a certain individuality to such an infinite variety of similar beings, in the near and familiar intercourse of life. They appear to us from this view like distant mountains, whose dark outlines we trace in the clear horizon, but the varieties of whose roughened sides, shaded with heath and brushwood, and seamed with many a cleft, we perceive not. When accidental anecdote reveals to us any weakness or peculiarity belonging to them, we start upon it like a discovery. They are made known to us in history only, by the great events they are connected with, and the part they have taken in extraordinary or important transactions. Even in poetry and romance, with the exception of some love-story interwoven with the main events of their lives, they are seldom more intimately made known to us. To Tragedy it belongs to lead them forward to our nearer regard, in all the distinguishing varieties which nearer inspection

discovers ; with the passions, the humours, the weaknesses, the prejudices of men. It is for her to present to us the great and magnanimous hero, who appears to our distant view as a superior being, as a god, softened down with those smaller frailties and imperfections which enable us to glory in, and claim kindred to his virtues. It is for her to exhibit to us the daring and ambitious man, planning his dark designs, and executing his bloody purposes, marked with those appropriate characteristicks, which distinguish him as an individual of that class ; and agitated with those varied passions, which disturb the mind of man when he is engaged in the commission of such deeds. It is for her to point out to us the brave and impetuous warrior, struck with those visitations of nature, which, in certain situations, will unnerve the strongest arm, and make the boldest heart tremble. It is for her to show the tender, gentle, and unassuming mind, animated with that fire which, by the provocation of circumstances, will give to the kindest heart the ferocity and keenness of a tiger. It is for her to present to us the great and striking characters that are to be found amongst men, in a way which the poet, the novelist, and the historian can but imperfectly attempt. But above all, to her, and to her only it belongs, to unveil to us the human mind under the dominion of those strong and fixed passions,

which, seemingly unprovoked by outward circumstances, will, from small beginnings, brood within the breast, till all the better dispositions, all the fair gifts of nature are borne down before them ; those passions which conceal themselves from the observation of men ; which cannot unbosom themselves even to the dearest friend ; and can, oftentimes, only give their fulness vent in the lonely desert, or in the darkness of midnight. For who hath followed the great man into his secret closet, or stood by the side of his nightly couch, and heard those exclamations of the soul which heaven alone may hear, that the historian should be able to inform us ? and what form of story, what mode of rehearsed speech will communicate to us those feelings, whose irregular bursts, abrupt transitions, sudden pauses, and half-uttered suggestions, scorn all harmony of measured verse, all method and order of relation ?

On the first part of this task her Bards have eagerly exerted their abilities : and some amongst them, taught by strong original genius to deal immediately with human nature and their own hearts, have laboured in it successfully. But in presenting to us those views of great characters, and of the human mind in difficult and trying situations, which peculiarly belong to Tragedy, the far greater proportion, even of those who may be considered as respectable dramatick poets,

have very much failed. From the beauty of those original dramas to which they have ever looked back with admiration, they have been tempted to prefer the embellishments of poetry to faithfully delineated nature. They have been more occupied in considering the works of the great dramatists who have gone before them, and the effects produced by their writings, than the varieties of human character which first furnished materials for those works, or those principles in the mind of man by means of which such effects were produced. Neglecting the boundless variety of nature, certain strong outlines of character, certain bold features of passion, certain grand vicissitudes, and striking dramattick situations, have been repeated from one generation to another ; whilst a pompous and solemn gravity, which they have supposed to be necessary for the dignity of tragedy, has excluded almost entirely from their works those smaller touches of nature, which so well develope the mind ; and by showing men in their hours of state and exertion only, they have consequently shown them imperfectly. Thus, great and magnanimous heroes, who bear with majestic equanimity every vicissitude of fortune ; who in every temptation and trial stand forth in unshaken virtue, like a rock buffeted by the waves ; who, encompassed with the most terrible evils, in calm possession of their souls, reason upon the difficulties of

their state ; and, even upon the brink of destruction, pronounce long eulogiums on virtue, in the most eloquent and beautiful language, have been held forth to our view as objects of imitation and interest : as though they had entirely forgotten that it is only for creatures like ourselves that we feel, and therefore, only from creatures like ourselves that we receive the instruction of example.* Thus passionate and impetuous warriors, who are proud, irritable, and vindictive, but generous, daring, and disinterested ; setting their lives at a pin's fee for the good of others, but incapable of curbing their own humour of a moment to gain the whole world for themselves ; who will pluck the orbs of heaven from their places, and crush

* To a being perfectly free from all human infirmity our sympathy refuses to extend. Our Saviour himself, whose character is so beautiful, and so harmoniously consistent ; in whom, with outward proofs of his mission less strong than those that are offered to us, I should still be compelled to believe, from being utterly unable to conceive how the idea of such a character could enter into the imagination of man, never touches the heart more nearly than when he says, " Father, let this cup pass from me." Had he been represented to us in all the unshaken strength of these tragic heroes, his disciples would have made fewer converts, and his precepts would have been listened to coldly. Plays in which heroes of this kind are held forth, and whose aim is, indeed, honourable and praiseworthy, have been admired by the cultivated and refined, but the tears of the simple, the applauses of the young and untaught have been wanting.

the whole universe in one grasp, are called forth to kindle in our souls the generous contempt of every thing abject and base ; but with an effect proportionably feeble, as the hero is made to exceed in courage and fire what the standard of humanity will agree to.* Thus,

* In all burlesque imitations of tragedy, those plays in which this hero is pre-eminent, are always exposed to bear the great brunt of the ridicule, which proves how popular they have been, and how many poets, and good ones too, have been employed upon them. That they have been so popular, however, is not owing to the intrinsic merit of the characters they represent, but their opposition to those mean and contemptible qualities belonging to human nature, of which we are most ashamed. Besides, there is something in the human mind, independently of its love of applause, which inclines it to boast. This is ever the attendant of that elasticity of soul, which makes us bound up from the touch of oppression ; and if there is nothing in the accompanying circumstances to create disgust, or suggest suspicions of their sincerity, (as in real life is commonly the case,) we are very apt to be carried along with the boasting of others. Let us in good earnest believe that a man is capable of achieving all that human courage can achieve, and we shall suffer him to talk of impossibilities. Amidst all their pomp of words, therefore, our admiration of such heroes is readily excited, (for the understanding is more easily deceived than the heart); but how stands our sympathy affected? As no caution nor foresight, on their own account, is ever suffered to occupy the thoughts of such bold disinterested beings, we are the more inclined to care for them, and to take an interest in their fortune through the course of the play : yet, as their souls are unappalled by any thing ; as pain and death are not at all regarded by

tender and pathetic lovers, full of the most gentle affections, the most amiable dispositions, and the most exquisite feelings; who present their defenceless bosoms to the storms of this rude world in all the graceful weakness of sensibility, are made to sigh out their sorrows in one unvaried strain of studied pathos, whilst this constant demand upon our feelings makes us absolutely incapable of answering it.* Thus, also, tyrants are represented as monsters of cruelty, unmixed with any feelings of humanity; and villains as delighting in all manner of treachery and deceit, and acting, upon many occasions, for the very love of villany itself; though the perfectly wicked are as ill fitted for the purposes of warning, as the per-

them; and as we have seen them very ready to plunge their own swords into their own bosoms, on no very weighty occasion, perhaps, their death distresses us but little, and they commonly fall unwept.

* Were it not, that in tragedies where these heroes pre-
side, the same soft tones of sorrow are so often repeated in our ears, till we are perfectly tired of it, they are more fitted to interest us than any other; both because in seeing them, we own the ties of kindred between ourselves and the frail mortals we lament; and sympathize with the weakness of mortality unmixed with any thing to degrade or disgust; and also because the misfortunes, which form the story of the play, are frequently of the more familiar and domestic kind. A king driven from his throne will not move our sympathy so strongly, as a private man torn from the bosom of his family.

fectly virtuous are for those of example.* This spirit of imitation, and attention to effect, has likewise confined them very much in their choice of situations and events to bring their great characters into action: rebellions, conspiracies, contentions for empire, and rivalships in love, have alone been thought worthy of trying those heroes; and palaces and dungeons the only places magnificent or solemn enough for them to appear in.

They have, indeed, from this regard to the works of preceding authors, and great attention to the beauties of composition, and to dignity of design, enriched their plays with much striking and sometimes sublime imagery, lofty thoughts, and virtuous sentiments; but in striving so eagerly to excel in those things that

* I have said nothing here in regard to female character, though in many tragedies it is brought forward as the principal one of the piece, because what I have said of the above characters is likewise applicable to it. I believe there is no man that ever lived, who has behaved in a certain manner on a certain occasion, who has not had amongst women some corresponding spirit, who, on the like occasion, and every way similarly circumstanced, would have behaved in the like manner. With some degree of softening and refinement, each class of the tragic heroes I have mentioned has its corresponding one amongst the heroines. The tender and pathetic no doubt has the most numerous, but the great and magnanimous is not without it, and the passionate and impetuous boasts of one by no means inconsiderable in numbers, and drawn sometimes to the full as passionate and impetuous as itself.

belong to tragedy in common with many other compositions, they have very much neglected those that are peculiarly her own. As far as they have been led aside from the first labours of a tragic poet by a desire to communicate more perfect moral instruction, their motive has been respectable, and they merit our esteem. But this praiseworthy end has been injured instead of promoted by their mode of pursuing it. Every species of moral writing has its own way of conveying instruction, which it can never, but with disadvantage, exchange for any other. The Drama improves us by the knowledge we acquire of our own minds, from the natural desire we have to look into the thoughts, and observe the behaviour of others. Tragedy brings to our view, men placed in those elevated situations, exposed to those great trials, and engaged in those extraordinary transactions, in which few of us are called upon to act. As examples applicable to ourselves, therefore, they can but feebly affect us; it is only from the enlargement of our ideas in regard to human nature, from that admiration of virtue and abhorrence of vice which they excite, that we can expect to be improved by them. But if they are not represented to us as real and natural characters, the lessons we are taught from their conduct and their sentiments will be no more to us, than those which we receive from the pages of the poet or the moralist.

But the last part of the task which I have mentioned as peculiarly belonging to tragedy, unveiling the human mind under the dominion of those strong and fixed passions, which, seemingly unprovoked by outward circumstances, will from small beginnings brood within the breast, till all the better dispositions, all the fair gifts of nature are borne down before them, her poets in general have entirely neglected, and even her first and greatest have but imperfectly attempted. They have made use of the passions to mark their several characters, and animate their scenes, rather than to open to our view the nature and portraiture of those great disturbers of the human breast, with whom we are all, more or less, called upon to contend. With their strong and obvious features, therefore, they have been presented to us, stripped almost entirely of those less obtrusive, but not less discriminating traits, which mark them in their actual operation. To trace them in their rise and progress in the heart, seems but rarely to have been the object of any dramatist. We commonly find the characters of a tragedy affected by the passions in a transient, loose, unconnected manner; or if they are represented as under the permanent influence of the more powerful ones, they are generally introduced to our notice in the very height of their fury, when all that timidity, irresolution, distrust, and a thou-

sand delicate traits, which make the infancy of every great passion more interesting, perhaps, than its full-blown strength, are fled. The impassioned character is generally brought into view under those irresistible attacks of their power, which it is impossible to repel; whilst those gradual steps that lead him into this state, in some of which a stand might have been made against the foe, are left entirely in the shade. Those passions that may be suddenly excited, and are of short duration, as anger, fear, and oftentimes jealousy, may in this manner be fully represented; but those great masters of the soul, ambition, hatred, love, every passion that is permanent in its nature, and varied in progress, if represented to us but in one stage of its course, is represented imperfectly. It is a characteristic of the more powerful passions, that they will increase and nourish themselves on very slender aliment; it is from within that they are chiefly supplied with what they feed on; and it is in contending with opposite passions and affections of the mind that we best discover their strength, not with events. But in tragedy it is events more frequently than opposite affections which are opposed to them; and those often of such force and magnitude, that the passions themselves are almost obscured by the splendour and importance of the transactions to which they are attached. Besides being thus confined and

mutilated, the passions have been, in the greater part of our tragedies, deprived of the very power of making themselves known. Bold and figurative language belongs peculiarly to them. Poets, admiring those bold expressions which a mind, labouring with ideas too strong to be conveyed in the ordinary forms of speech, wildly throws out, taking earth, sea, and sky, every thing great and terrible in nature, to image forth the violence of its feelings, borrowed them gladly, to adorn the calm sentiments of their premeditated song. It has therefore been thought that the less animated parts of tragedy might be so embellished and enriched. In doing this, however, the passions have been robbed of their native prerogative; and in adorning with their strong figures and lofty expressions the calm speeches of the unruffled, it is found that, when they are called upon to raise their voice, the power of distinguishing themselves has been taken away. This is an injury by no means compensated, but very greatly aggravated, by embellishing, in return, the speeches of passion with the ingenious conceits, and complete similes of premeditated thought.* There are many other things

* This, perhaps, more than any thing else has injured the higher scenes of tragedy. For having made such free use of bold hyperbolical language in the inferior parts, the poet, when he arrives at the highly impassioned, sinks into total inability: or if he will force himself to rise still higher on

regarding the manner in which dramattick poets have generally brought forward the passions in tragedy, to the greatest prejudice of that effect they are naturally fitted to produce upon the mind, which I forbear to mention, lest they should too much increase the length of this discourse; and leave an impression on the mind of my reader, that I write more in the spirit of criticism than becomes one who is about to bring before the public a work, with, doubtless, many faults and imperfections on its head.

From this general view, which I have endeavoured to communicate to my reader of tragedy, and those principles in the human mind upon which the success of her efforts depends, I have been led to believe, that an attempt to write a series of tragedies, of simpler construction, less embellished with poetical decorations, less constrained by that lofty seriousness which has so generally been considered as necessary for the support of tragic dignity, and in which the chief object should be to delineate the progress of the higher passions in the human breast, each play exhibiting a particular passion, might not be unacceptable to the public. And I have been the more readily induced to act upon this idea, because I am confident, that tragedy, written upon

the wing, he flies beyond nature altogether, into the regions of bombast and nonsense.

this plan, is fitted to produce stronger moral effect than upon any other. I have said that tragedy, in representing to us great characters struggling with difficulties, and placed in situations of eminence and danger, in which few of us have any chance of being called upon to act, conveys its moral efficacy to our minds by the enlarged views which it gives to us of human nature, by the admiration of virtue and execration of vice which it excites, and not by the examples it holds up for our immediate application. But in opening to us the heart of man under the influence of those passions to which all are liable, this is not the case. Those strong passions that, with small assistance from outward circumstances, work their way in the heart till they become the tyrannical masters of it, carry on a similar operation in the breast of the Monarch, and the man of low degree. It exhibits to us the mind of man in that state when we are most curious to look into it, and is equally interesting to all. Discrimination of character is a turn of mind, though more common than we are aware of, which every body does not possess; but to the expressions of passion, particularly strong passion, the dullest mind is awake; and its true unsophisticated language the dullest understanding will not misinterpret. To hold up for our example those peculiarities in disposition and modes of thinking which nature has fixed upon us, or which

long and early habit has incorporated with our original selves, is almost desiring us to remove the everlasting mountains, to take away the native land-marks of the soul ; but representing the passions, brings before us the operation of a tempest that rages out its time and passes away. We cannot, it is true, amidst its wild uproar, listen to the voice of reason, and save ourselves from destruction ; but we can foresee its coming, we can mark its rising signs, we can know the situations that will most expose us to its rage, and we can shelter our heads from the coming blast. To change a certain disposition of mind which makes us view objects in a particular light, and thereby, oftentimes, unknown to ourselves, influences our conduct and manners, is almost impossible ; but in checking and subduing those visitations of the soul, whose causes and effects we are aware of, every one may make considerable progress, if he proves not entirely successful. Above all, looking back to the first rise, and tracing the progress of passion, points out to us those stages in the approach of the enemy, when he might have been combated most successfully ; and where the suffering him to pass may be considered as occasioning all the misery that ensues.

Comedy presents to us men, as we find them in the ordinary intercourse of the world, with all the weaknesses, follies, caprice, prejudices, and absur-

ditiez which a near and familiar view of them discovers. It is her task to exhibit them engaged in the busy turmoil of ordinary life, harassing and perplexing themselves with the endless pursuits of avarice, vanity, and pleasure; and engaged with those smaller trials of the mind, by which men are most apt to be overcome, and from which he, who could have supported with honour the attack of great occasions, will oftentimes come off most shamefully foiled. It belongs to her to shew the varied fashions and manners of the world, as, from the spirit of vanity, caprice, and imitation, they go on in swift and endless succession; and those disagreeable or absurd peculiarities attached to particular classes and conditions in society. It is for her also to represent men under the influence of the stronger passions; and to trace the rise and progress of them in the heart, in such situations, and attended with such circumstances, as take off their sublimity, and the interest we naturally take in a perturbed mind. It is hers to exhibit those terrible tyrants of the soul, whose ungovernable rage has struck us so often with dismay, like wild beasts tied to a post, who growl and paw before us, for our derision and sport. In portraying the characters of men she has this advantage over tragedy, that the smallest traits of nature, with the smallest circumstances which serve to bring them

forth, may by her be displayed, however ludicrous and trivial in themselves, without any ceremony. And in developing the passions she enjoys a similar advantage; for they often more strongly betray themselves when touched by those small and familiar occurrences which cannot, consistently with the effect it is intended to produce, be admitted into tragedy.

As tragedy has been very much cramped in her endeavours to exalt and improve the mind, by that spirit of imitation and confinement in her successive writers, which the beauty of her earliest poets first gave rise to, so comedy has been led aside from her best purposes by a different temptation. Those endless changes in fashions and in manners, which offer such obvious and ever-new subjects of ridicule; that infinite variety of tricks and manœuvres by which the ludicrous may be produced, and curiosity and laughter excited; the admiration we so generally bestow upon satirical remark, pointed repartee, and whimsical combinations of ideas, have too often led her to forget the warmer interest we feel, and the more profitable lessons we receive, from genuine representations of nature. The most interesting and instructive class of comedy, therefore, the real characteristic, has been very much neglected, whilst satirical, witty, sentimental, and, above all, busy or circumstantial comedy, have usurped the ex-

ertions of the far greater proportion of Dramatic Writers.

In Satirical Comedy, sarcastick and severe reflections on the actions and manners of men, introduced with neatness, force, and poignancy of expression, into a lively and well-supported dialogue, of whose gay surface they are the embossed ornaments, make the most important and studied part of the work: character is a thing talked of rather than shewn. The persons of the drama are indebted for the discovery of their peculiarities to what is said of them, rather than to any thing they are made to say or do for themselves. Much incident being unfavourable for studied and elegant dialogue, the plot is commonly simple, and the few events that compose it neither interesting nor striking. It only affords us that kind of moral instruction which an essay or a poem could as well have conveyed, and, though amusing in the closet, is but feebly attractive in the Theatre.*

In what I have termed Witty Comedy, every thing is light, playful, and easy. Strong, decided

* These plays are generally the work of men, whose judgement and acute observation enable them admirably well to generalize, and apply to classes of men, the remarks they have made upon individuals; yet know not how to dress up, with any natural congruity, an imaginary individual in the attributes they have assigned to those classes.

condemnation of vice is too weighty and material to dance upon the surface of that stream, whose shallow currents sparkle in perpetual sunbeams, and cast up their bubbles to the light. Two or three persons of quick thought, and whimsical fancy, who perceive instantaneously the various connections of every passing idea, and the significations, natural or artificial, which single expressions, or particular forms of speech can possibly convey, take the lead through the whole, and seem to communicate their own peculiar talent to every creature in the play. The plot is most commonly feeble rather than simple, the incidents being numerous enough, but seldom striking or varied. To amuse, and only to amuse, is its aim ; it pretends not to interest nor instruct. It pleases when we read, more than when we see it represented ; and pleases still more when we take it up by accident, and read but a scene at a time.

Sentimental Comedy treats of those embarrassments, difficulties, and scruples, which, though sufficiently distressing to the delicate minds who entertain them, are not powerful enough to gratify the sympathetick desire we all feel to look into the heart of man in difficult and trying situations, which is the sound basis of tragedy, and are destitute of that seasoning of the lively and ludicrous, which prevents the ordinary transactions of comedy from becoming insipid. In real life, those who,

from the peculiar frame of their minds, feel most of this refined distress, are not generally communicative upon the subject; and those who do feel and talk about it at the same time, if any such there be, seldom find their friends much inclined to listen to them. It is not to be supposed, then, long conversations upon the stage about small sentimental niceties, can be generally interesting. I am afraid plays of this kind, as well as works of a similar nature, in other departments of literature, have only tended to increase amongst us a set of sentimental hypocrites; who are the same persons of this age that would have been the religious ones of another; and are daily doing morality the same kind of injury, by substituting the particular excellence which they pretend to possess, for plain simple uprightness and rectitude.

In *Busy or Circumstantial Comedy*, all those ingenious contrivances of lovers, guardians, governantes, and chambermaids; that ambushed bush-fighting amongst closets, screens, chests, easy-chairs, and toilet-tables, form a gay, varied game of dexterity and invention: which, to those who have played at hide and seek, who have crouched down, with beating heart, in a dark corner, whilst the enemy groped near the spot; who have joined their busy school-mates in many a deep-laid plan to deceive, perplex, and torment the unhappy mortals deputed to have the charge of them, cannot be

seen with indifference. Like an old hunter, who pricks up his ears at the sound of the chase, and starts away from the path of his journey, so, leaving all wisdom and criticism behind us, we follow the varied changes of the plot, and stop not for reflection. The studious man who wants a cessation from thought, the indolent man who dislikes it, and all those who, from habit or circumstances, live in a state of divorce from their own minds, are pleased with an amusement, in which they have nothing to do but to open their eyes and behold. The moral tendency of it, however, is very faulty. That mockery of age and domestick authority, so constantly held forth, has a very bad effect upon the younger part of an audience; and that continual lying and deceit in the first characters of the piece, which is necessary for conducting the plot, has a most pernicious one.

But Characteristick Comedy, which represents to us this motley world of men and women in which we live, under those circumstances of ordinary and familiar life most favourable to the discovery of the human heart, offers to us a wide field of instruction adapted to general application. We find in its varied scenes an exercise of the mind analogous to that which we all, less or more, find out for ourselves, amidst the mixed groups of people whom we meet with in society; and which I have already mentioned as an exercise universally pleasing to

man. As the distinctions which it is its highest aim to discriminate, are those of nature and not situation, they are judged of by all ranks of men; for a peasant will very clearly perceive in the character of a peer those native peculiarities which belong to him as a man, though he is entirely at a loss in all that regards his manners and address as a nobleman. It illustrates to us the general remarks we have made upon men; and in it we behold, spread before us, plans of those original ground-works, upon which the general ideas we have been taught to conceive of mankind, are founded. It stands but little in need of busy plot, extraordinary incidents, witty repartee, or studied sentiments. It naturally produces for itself all that it requires. Characters, who are to speak for themselves, who are to be known by their own words and actions, not by the accounts that are given of them by others, cannot well be developed without considerable variety of judicious incident: a smile that is raised by some trait of undisguised nature, and a laugh that is provoked by some ludicrous effect of passion, or clashing of opposite characters, will be more pleasing to the generality of men, than either the one or the other when occasioned by a play upon words, or a whimsical combination of ideas; and to behold the operation and effects of the different propensities and weaknesses of men, will naturally call up in the mind of the spectator

moral reflections more applicable, and more impressive than all the high-sounding sentiments with which the graver scenes of Satirical and Sentimental Comedy are so frequently interlarded. It is much to be regretted, however, that the eternal introduction of love as the grand business of the Drama, and the consequent necessity for making the chief persons in it, such, in regard to age, appearance, manners, dispositions, and endowments, as are proper for interesting lovers, has occasioned so much insipid similarity in the higher characters. It is chiefly, therefore, on the second and inferior characters, that the efforts, even of our best poets, have been exhausted: and thus we are called upon to be interested in the fortune of one man, whilst our chief attention is directed to the character of another, which produces a disunion of ideas in the mind, injurious to the general effect of the whole. From this cause, also, those characteristick varieties have been very much neglected, which men present to us in the middle stages of life; when they are too old for lovers or the confidants of lovers, and too young to be the fathers, uncles, and guardians, who are contrasted with them; but when they are still in full vigour of mind, eagerly engaged with the world, joining the activity of youth to the providence of age, and offer to our attention objects sufficiently interesting and instructive. It is to be regretted that strong

contrasts of character are too often attempted, instead of those harmonious shades of it, which nature so beautifully varies, and which we so greatly delight in, whenever we clearly distinguish them. It is to be regretted that in place of those characters, which present themselves to the imagination of a writer from his general observations upon mankind, inferiour poets have so often pourtrayed with senseless minuteness the characters of particular individuals. We are pleased with the eccentricities of individuals in real life, and also in history or biography, but in fictitious writings we regard them with suspicion; and no representation of nature, that corresponds not with some of our general ideas in regard to it, will either instruct or inform us. When the originals of such characters are known and remembered, the plays in which they are introduced are oftentimes popular; and their temporary success has induced a still inferiour class of poets to believe, that, by making men strange, and unlike the rest of the world, they have made great discoveries, and mightily enlarged the boundaries of dramattick character. They will, therefore, distinguish one man from another by some strange whim or imagination, which is ever uppermost in his thoughts, and influences every action of his life; by some singular opinion, perhaps, about politicks, fashions, or the position of the stars; by some strong unaccountable love for

one thing, or aversion from another ; entirely forgetting, that such singularities, if they are to be found in nature, can no where be sought for, with such probability of success, as in Bedlam. Above all it is to be regretted that those adventitious distinctions amongst men, of age, fortune, rank, profession, and country, are so often brought forward in preference to the great original distinctions of nature ; and our scenes, so often filled with courtiers, lawyers, citizens, Frenchmen, &c. &c. with all the characteristicks of their respective conditions, such as they have been represented from time immemorial. This has introduced a great sameness into many of our plays, which all the changes of new fashions burlesqued, and new customs turned into ridicule, cannot conceal.

In comedy, the stronger passions, love excepted, are seldom introduced but in a passing way. We have short bursts of anger, fits of jealousy and impatience ; violent passion of any continuance we seldom find. When this is attempted, however, forgetting that mode of exposing the weakness of the human mind, which peculiarly belongs to her, it is too frequently done in the serious spirit of tragedy ; and this has produced so many of those serious comick plays, which so much divide and distract our attention.* Yet we all know from

* Such plays, however excellent the parts may be of which they are composed, can never produce the same

our own experience in real life, that, in certain situations, and under certain circumstances, the stronger passions are fitted to produce scenes more exquisitely comick than any other: and one well-wrought scene of this kind will have

strength and unity of effect upon our minds which we receive from plays of a simpler undivided construction. If the serious and distressing scenes make a deep impression, we do not find ourselves in a humour for the comick ones that succeed; and if the comick scenes enliven us greatly, we feel tardy and unalert in bringing back our minds to a proper tone for the serious. As in tragedy we smile at those native traits of character, or that occasional sprightliness of dialogue, which are sometimes introduced, to animate her less interesting parts, so may we be moved by comedy; but our tears should be called forth by those gentle strokes of nature, which come at once with kindred kindness on the heart, and are quickly succeeded by smiles. Like a small summer-cloud, whose rain-drops sparkle in the sun, and which swiftly passes away, is the genuine pathetick of comedy; the gathering foreseen storm, that darkens the whole face of the sky, belongs to tragedy alone. It is often observed, I confess, that we are more apt to be affected by those scenes of distress which we meet with in comedy, than the high-wrought woes of tragedy; and I believe it is true. But this arises from the woes of tragedy being so often appropriated to high and mighty personages, and strained beyond the modesty of nature, in order to suit their great dignity; or, from the softened griefs of more gentle and familiar characters, being rendered feeble and tiresome with too much repetition and whining. It arises from the greater facility with which we enter into the distresses of people more upon a level with ourselves; and whose sorrows are expressed in less studied and unnatural language.

a more powerful effect in repressing similar intemperance in the mind of a spectator, than many moral cautions, or even, perhaps, than the terrific examples of tragedy. There are to be found, no doubt, in the works of our best dramatick writers, comick scenes descriptive of the stronger passions, but it is generally the inferiour characters of the piece who are made the subjects of them, very rarely those in whom we are much interested; and consequently the useful effect of such scenes upon the mind is very much weakened. This general appropriation of them has tempted our less skilful Dramatists to exaggerate, and step, in further quest of the ludicrous, so much beyond the bounds of nature, that the very effect they are so anxious to produce is thereby destroyed, and all useful application of it entirely cut off; for we never apply to ourselves a false representation of nature.

But a complete exhibition of passion, with its varieties and progress in the breast of man, has, I believe, scarcely ever been attempted in comedy. Even love, though the chief subject of almost every play, has been pourtrayed in a loose, scattered, and imperfect manner. The story of the lovers is acted over before us, whilst the characteristicks of that passion by which they are actuated, and which is the great master-spring of the whole, are faintly to be discovered. We are generally introduced to a lover after he has

long been acquainted with his mistress, and wants but the consent of some stubborn relation, relief from some embarrassment of situation, or the clearing up some mistake or love-quarrel occasioned by malice or accident, to make him completely happy. To overcome these difficulties, he is engaged in a busy train of contrivance and exertion, in which the spirit, activity, and ingenuity of the man is held forth to view, whilst the lover, comparatively speaking, is kept out of sight. But even when this is not the case ; when the lover is not so busied and involved, this stage of the passion is exactly the one that is least interesting, and least instructive : not to mention, as I have done already, that one stage of any passion must shew it imperfectly.

From this view of the Comick Drama, I have been induced to believe, that, as companions to the forementioned tragedies, a series of comedies on a similar plan, in which bustle of plot, brilliancy of dialogue, and even the bold and striking in character, should, to the best of the authour's judgment, be kept in due subordination to nature, might likewise be acceptable to the publick. I am confident that comedy upon this plan is capable of being made as interesting as entertaining, and superiour in moral tendency to any other. For even in ordinary life, with very slight cause to excite them, strong passions will foster

themselves within the breast ; and what are all the evils which vanity, folly, prejudice, or peculiarity of temper lead to, compared with those which such unquiet inmates produce? Were they confined to the exalted and the mighty, to those engaged in the great events of the world, to the inhabitants of palaces and camps, how happy, comparatively, would this world be ! But many a miserable being, whom firm principle, timidity of character, or the fear of shame keeps back from the actual commission of crimes, is tormented in obscurity, under the dominion of those passions which place the seducer in ambush, rouse the bold spoiler to wrong, and strengthen the arm of the murderer. Though to those with whom such dangerous enemies have long found shelter, exposing them in an absurd and ridiculous light, may be shooting a finely-pointed arrow against the hardened rock ; yet to those with whom they are but new, and less assured guests, this may prove a more successful mode of attack than any other.

It was the saying of a sagacious Scotchman, “ Let who will make the laws of a nation, if I have the writing of its ballads.” Something similar to this may be said in regard to the Drama. Its lessons reach not, indeed, to the lowest classes of the labouring people, who are the broad foundation of society, which can never be generally moved without en-

dangering every thing that is constructed upon it, and who are our potent and formidable ballad-readers; but they reach to the classes next in order to them, and who will always have over them no inconsiderable influence. The impressions made by it are communicated, at the same instant of time, to a greater number of individuals than those made by any other species of writing; and they are strengthened in every spectator, by observing their effects upon those who surround him. From this observation, the mind of my reader will suggest of itself what it would be unnecessary, and, perhaps, improper in me here to enlarge upon. The theatre is a school in which much good or evil may be learned. At the beginning of its career, the Drama was employed to mislead and excite; and, were I not unwilling to refer to transactions of the present times, I might abundantly confirm what I have said by recent examples. The authour, therefore, who aims in any degree to improve the mode of its instruction, and point to more useful lessons than it is generally employed to dispense, is certainly praiseworthy, though want of abilities may unhappily prevent him from being successful in his efforts.

This idea has prompted me to begin a work in which I am aware of many difficulties. In plays of this nature the passions must be depicted

not only with their bold and prominent features, but also with those minute and delicate traits which distinguish them in an infant, growing, and repressed state; which are the most difficult of all to counterfeit, and one of which, falsely imagined, will destroy the effect of a whole scene. The characters over whom they are made to usurp dominion must be powerful and interesting, exercising them with their full measure of opposition and struggle; for the chief antagonists they contend with must be the other passions and propensities of the heart, not outward circumstances and events. Though belonging to such characters, they must still be held to view in the most baleful and un-seductive light; and those qualities in the impassioned which are necessary to interest us in their fate, must not be allowed, by any lustre borrowed from them, to diminish our abhorrence of guilt. The second, and even the inferior persons of each play, as they must be kept perfectly distinct from the great impassioned one, should generally be represented in a calm unagitated state, and therefore more pains are necessary than in other dramatick works to mark them by appropriate distinctions of character, lest they should appear altogether insipid and insignificant. As the great object here is to trace passion through all its varieties, and in every stage, many of which are marked

by shades so delicate, that in much bustle of events they would be little attended to, or entirely overlooked, simplicity of plot is more necessary than in those plays where only occasional bursts of passion are introduced, to distinguish a character, or animate a scene. But where simplicity of plot is necessary, there is very great danger of making a piece appear bare and unvaried, and nothing but great force and truth in the delineations of nature will prevent it from being tiresome.* Soliloquy, or those overflowings of the per-

* To make up for this simplicity of plot, the show and decorations of the theatre ought to be allowed to plays written upon this plan in their full extent. How fastidious soever some poets may be in regard to these matters, it is much better to relieve our tired-out attention with a battle, a banquet, or a procession, than an accumulation of incidents. In the latter case the mind is harassed and confused with those doubts, conjectures, and disappointments which multiplied events occasion, and in a great measure unfitted for attending to the worthier parts of the piece: but in the former it enjoys a rest, a pleasing pause in its more serious occupation, from which it can return again, without any incumbrance of foreign intruding ideas. The show of a splendid procession will afford to a person of the best understanding, a pleasure in kind, though not in degree, with that which a child would receive from it; but when it is past he thinks no more of it; whereas some confusion of circumstances, some half-explained mistake, which gives him no pleasure at all when it takes place, may take his attention afterwards from the refined beauties of a natural and characteristick dialogue.

turbed soul, in which it unburthens itself of those thoughts which it cannot communicate to others, and which in certain situations is the only mode that a Dramatist can employ to open to us the mind he would display, must necessarily be often, and to considerable length, introduced. Here, indeed, as it naturally belongs to passion, it will not be so offensive as it generally is in other plays, when a calm unagitated person tells over to himself all that has befallen him, and all his future schemes of intrigue or advancement; yet to make speeches of this kind sufficiently natural and impressive to excite no degree of weariness nor distaste, will be found to be no easy task. There are, besides these, many other difficulties belonging peculiarly to this undertaking, too minute and tedious to mention. If, fully aware of them, I have not shrunk back from the attempt, it is not from any idea that my own powers or discernment will at all times enable me to overcome them; but I am emboldened by the confidence I feel in that candour and indulgence, with which the good and enlightened do ever regard the experimental efforts of those who wish in any degree to enlarge the sources of pleasure and instruction amongst men.

It will now be proper to say something of the particular plays which compose this volume. But in the first place, I must observe, that as I pretend

not to have overcome the difficulties attached to this design ; so neither from the errors and defects, which, in these pages, I have thought it necessary to point out in the works of others, do I at all pretend to be blameless. To conceive the great moral object and outline of the story ; to people it with various characters, under the influence of various passions ; and to strike out circumstances and situations calculated to call them into action, is a very different employment of the mind from calmly considering those propensities of our nature, to which dramattick writings are most powerfully addressed, and taking a general view upon those principles of the works of preceding authours. They are employments which cannot well occupy it at the same time ; and experience has taught us, that criticks do not unfrequently write in contradiction to their own rules. If I should, therefore, sometimes appear, in the foregoing remarks, to have provided a stick wherewith to break my own pate, I entreat that my reader will believe I am neither confident nor boastful, and use it with gentleness.

In the first two plays, where love is the passion under review, their relation to the general plan may not be very obvious. Love is the chief ground-work of almost all our tragedies and comedies, and so far they are not distinguished from others. But I have endeavoured

in both to give an unbroken view of the passion from its beginning, and to mark it as I went along, with those peculiar traits which distinguish its different stages of progression. I have in both these pieces grafted this passion, not on those open, communicative, impetuous characters, who have so long occupied the dramatick station of lovers, but on men of a firm, thoughtful, reserved turn of mind, with whom it commonly makes the longest stay, and maintains the hardest struggle. I should be extremely sorry if, from any thing at the conclusion of the tragedy, it should be supposed that I mean to countenance suicide, or condemn those customs whose object is the discouragement of it, by withholding from the body of the self-slain those sacred rites and marks of respect commonly shewn to the dead. Let it be considered, that whatever I have inserted there, which can at all raise any suspicion of this kind, is put into the mouths of rude uncultivated soldiers, who are roused with the loss of a beloved leader, and indignant at any idea of disgrace being attached to him. If it should seem inconsistent with the nature of this work, that in its companion, the comedy, I have made strong moral principle triumph over love, let it be remembered, that, without this, the whole moral tendency of a play, which must end happily, would have been destroyed; and that it is not my intention to encourage the in-

dulgence of this passion, amiable as it is, but to restrain it. The last play, the subject of which is hatred, will more clearly discover the nature and intention of my design. The rise and progress of this passion I have been obliged to give in retrospect, instead of representing it all along in its actual operation, as I could have wished to have done. But hatred is a passion of slow growth; and to have exhibited it from its beginnings would have included a longer period than even those who are least scrupulous about the limitation of dramattick time would have thought allowable. I could not have introduced my chief characters upon the stage as boys, and then as men. For this passion must be kept distinct from that dislike which we conceive for another when he has greatly offended us, and which is almost the constant companion of anger; and also from that eager desire to crush, and inflict suffering on him who has injured us, which constitutes revenge. This passion, as I have conceived it, is that rooted and settled aversion, which from opposition of character, aided by circumstances of little importance, grows at last into such antipathy and personal disgust as makes him who entertains it, feel, in the presence of him who is the object of it, a degree of torment and restlessness which is insufferable. It is a passion, I believe, less frequent than any other of

the stronger passions, but in the breast where it does exist, it creates, perhaps, more misery than any other. To endeavour to interest the mind for a man under the dominion of a passion so baleful, so unamiable, may seem, perhaps, reprehensible. I therefore beg it may be considered, that it is the passion and not the man which is held up to our execration: and that this and every other bad passion does more strongly evince its pernicious and dangerous nature, when we see it thus counteracting and destroying the good gifts of Heaven, than when it is represented as the suitable associate, in the breast of inmates as dark as itself. This remark will likewise be applicable to many of the other plays belonging to my work, that are intended to follow. A decidedly wicked character can never be interesting; and to employ such for the display of any strong passion would very much injure, instead of improving, the moral effect. In the breast of a bad man passion has comparatively little to combat; how then can it shew its strength? I shall say no more upon this subject, but submit myself to the judgment of my reader.

It may, perhaps, be supposed, from my publishing these plays, that I have written them for the closet rather than the stage. If, upon perusing them with attention, the reader is disposed to think they are better calculated for the first than

the last, let him impute it to want of skill in the authour, and not to any previous design. A play but of small poetical merit, that is suited to strike and interest the spectator, to catch the attention of him who will not, and of him who cannot read, is a more valuable and useful production than one whose elegant and harmonious pages are admired in the libraries of the tasteful and refined. To have received approbation from an audience of my countrymen, would have been more pleasing to me than any other praise. A few tears from the simple and young would have been, in my eyes, pearls of great price; and the spontaneous, untutored plaudits of the rude and uncultivated would have come to my heart as offerings of no mean value. I should, therefore, have been better pleased to have introduced them to the world from the stage than from the press. I possess, however, no likely channel to the former mode of publick introduction: and, upon further reflection, it appeared to me, that by publishing them in this way, I have an opportunity afforded me of explaining the design of my work, and enabling the publick to judge, not only of each play by itself, but as making a part likewise of the whole; an advantage which, perhaps, does more than overbalance the splendour and effect of theatrical representation.

It may be thought, that with this extensive plan before me, I should not have been in a hurry to publish, but have waited to give a larger portion of it to the publick, which would have enabled them to make a truer estimate of its merit. To bring forth only three plays of the whole, and the last without its intended companion, may seem like the haste of those vain people, who, as soon as they have written a few pages of a discourse, or a few couplets of a poem, cannot be easy till every body has seen them. I do protest, in honest simplicity ! it is distrust and not confidence, that has led me, at this early stage of the undertaking, to bring it before the publick. To labour in uncertainty is at all times unpleasant : but to proceed in a long and difficult work with any impression upon your mind that your labour may be in vain ; that the opinion you have conceived of your ability to perform it may be a delusion, a false suggestion of self-love, the fantasy of an aspiring temper, is most discouraging and cheerless. I have not proceeded so far, indeed, merely upon the strength of my own judgment : but the friends to whom I have shewn my manuscripts are partial to me, and their approbation, which, in the case of any indifferent person, would be in my mind completely decisive, goes but a little way in relieving me from these apprehensions. To step beyond the

circle of my own immediate friends in quest of opinion, from the particular temper of my mind, I feel an uncommon repugnance : I can with less pain to myself bring them before the public at once, and submit to its decision.* It is to my countrymen at large I call for assistance. If this work is fortunate enough to attract their attention, let their strictures as well as their praise come to my aid : the one will encourage me in a long and arduous undertaking, the other will teach me to improve it as I advance. For there are many errors that may be detected, and improvements that may be suggested, in the prosecution of this work, which, from the observations of a great variety of readers, are more likely to be pointed out to me, than from those of a small number of persons, even of the best judgment. I am not possessed of that confidence in mine own powers, which enables the concealed genius, under the pressure of present discouragement, to pursue his labours in security, looking firmly forward to other more enlightened times for his reward. If my own countrymen, with whom I live and converse, who look upon the

* The first of these plays, indeed, has been shewn to two or three Gentlemen whom I have not the honour of reckoning amongst my friends. One of them, who is a man of distinguished talents, has honoured it with very flattering approbation ; and, at his suggestion, one or two slight alterations in it have been made.

same race of men, the same state of society, the same passing events with myself, receive not my offering, I presume not to look to posterity.

Before I close this discourse, let me crave the forbearance of my reader, if he has discovered in the course of it any unacknowledged use of the thoughts of other authours, which he thinks ought to have been noticed; and let me beg the same favour, if in reading the following plays, any similar neglect seems to occur. There are few writers who have sufficient originality of thought to strike out for themselves new ideas upon every occasion. When a thought presents itself to me, as suited to the purpose I am aiming at, I would neither be thought proud enough to reject it, on finding that another has used it before me, nor mean enough to make use of it without acknowledging the obligation, when I can at all guess to whom such acknowledgments are due. But I am situated where I have no library to consult; my reading through the whole of my life has been of a loose, scattered, unmethodical kind, with no determined direction, and I have not been blessed by nature with the advantages of a retentive or accurate memory. Do not, however, imagine from this, I at all wish to insinuate that I ought to be acquitted of every obligation to preceding authours; and that when a palpable similarity of thought and expression

is observable between us, it is a similarity produced by accident alone, and with perfect unconsciousness on my part. I am frequently sensible, from the manner in which an idea arises to my imagination, and the readiness with which words, also, present themselves to clothe it in, that I am only making use of some dormant part of that hoard of ideas which the most indifferent memories lay up, and not the native suggestions of mine own mind. Whenever I have suspected myself of doing so, in the course of this work, I have felt a strong inclination to mark that suspicion in a note. But, besides that it might have appeared like an affectation of scrupulousness which I would avoid, there being likewise, most assuredly, many other places in it where I have done the same thing without being conscious of it, a suspicion of wishing to slur them over, and claim all the rest as unreservedly my own, would unavoidably have attached to me. If this volume should appear, to any candid and liberal critick, to merit that he should take the trouble of pointing out to me in what parts of it I seem to have made that use of other authours' writings, which, according to the fair laws of literature, ought to have been acknowledged, I shall think myself obliged to him. I shall examine the sources he points out as having supplied my own lack of ideas; and if this book should have the good fortune to go through

a second edition, I shall not fail to owe my obligations to him, and the authors from whom I may have borrowed.

How little credit soever, upon perusing these plays, the reader may think me entitled to in regard to the execution of the work, he will not, I flatter myself, deny me some credit in regard to the plan. I know of no series of plays, in any language, expressly descriptive of the different passions; and I believe there are few plays existing, in which the display of one strong passion is the chief business of the drama, so written that they could properly make part of such a series. I do not think that we should, from the works of various authours, be able to make a collection which would give us any thing exactly of the nature of that which is here proposed. If the reader, in perusing it, perceives that the abilities of the authour are not proportioned to the task which is imposed upon them, he will wish in the spirit of kindness rather than of censure, as I most sincerely do, that they had been more adequate to it. However, if I perform it ill, I am still confident that this (pardon me if I call it so) noble design will not be suffered to fall to the ground: some one will arise after me who will do it justice; and there is no poet, possessing genius for such a work, who will not at the same time possess that spirit of justice and of candour, which will lead him to remember me with respect.

I have now only to thank my reader, whoever he may be, who has followed me through the pages of this discourse, for having had the patience to do so. May he, in going through what follows (a wish the sincerity of which he cannot doubt), find more to reward his trouble than I dare venture to promise him; and for the pains he has already taken, and those which he intends to take for me, I request that he will accept of my grateful acknowledgments.

Note. — Shakspeare, more than any of our poets, gives peculiar and appropriate distinction to the characters of his tragedies. The remarks I have made, in regard to the little variety of character to be met with in tragedy, apply not to him. Neither has he, as other dramatists generally do, bestowed pains on the chief persons of his drama only, leaving the second and inferiour ones insignificant and spiritless. He never wears out our capacity to feel, by eternally pressing upon it. His tragedies are agreeably chequered with variety of scenes, enriched with good sense, nature, and vivacity, which relieve our minds from the fatigue of continued distress. If he sometimes carries this so far as to break in upon that serious tone of mind, which disposes us to listen with effect to the higher scenes of tragedy, he has done so chiefly in his historical plays, where the distresses set forth are commonly of that public kind, which does not, at any rate, make much impression upon the feelings.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Plays contained in this volume were all laid by for, at least, one year, before they were copied out to prepare them for the press ; I have therefore had the advantage of reading them over, when they were in some measure effaced from my memory, and judging of them in some degree like an indifferent person. The Introduction has not had the same advantage ; it was copied out for the press immediately after I had finished it, and I have not had courage to open the book, or read any part of it, till it was put into my hands to be corrected for the third edition. Upon reading it over again, it appears to me that a tone of censure and decision is too often discoverable in it, which I have certainly no title to assume. It was, perhaps, difficult to avoid this fault, and at the same time completely to give the view I desired of my motives and plan in this work ; but I sincerely wish that I had been skilful enough to have accomplished it without falling into this error. Though I have escaped, as far as I know, all censure on this account, yet I wish the Publick to be assured, that I am both sensible of, and grateful for, their forbearance.

BASIL:
A TRAGEDY.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

COUNT BASIL, *a General in the Emperour's service.*

COUNT ROSINBERG, *his Friend.*

DUKE OF MANTUA.

GAURICEIO, *his Minister.*

VALTOMER, } *Two Officers of Basil's Troops.*
FREDERICK, }

GEOFFRY, *an old Soldier very much maimed in the wars.*

MIRANDO, *a little Boy, favourite to Victoria.*

WOMEN.

VICTORIA, *Daughter to the Duke of Mantua.*

COUNTESS OF ALBINI, *Friend and Governess to Victoria.*

ISABELLA, *a Lady attending upon Victoria.*

Officers, Soldiers, and Attendants, Masks,
Dancers, &c.

* * * *The Scene is in Mantua, and its environs.
Time supposed to be the Sixteenth Century, when
CHARLES the Fifth defeated FRANCIS the First, at
the Battle of Pavia.*

B A S I L.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An Open Street, crowded with People, who seem to be waiting in expectation of some show.*

Enter a CITIZEN.

First Man. Well, friend, what tidings of the grand procession?

Cit. I left it passing by the northern gate.

Second Man. I've waited long, I'm glad it comes at last.

Young Man. And does the Princess look so wondrous fair

As fame reports?

Cit. She is the fairest lady of the train, —
Yet all the fairest beauties of the court
Are in her train.

Old Man. Bears she such off'rings to Saint
Francis' shrine,
So rich, so marvellous rich, as rumour says?
— 'Twill drain the treasury!

Cit. Since she, in all this splendid pomp, returns
Her publick thanks to the good patron Saint,
Who from his sick bed hath restor'd her father,
Thou wouldst not have her go with empty hands?
She loves magnificence. —

(*Discovering amongst the crowd Old Geoffry.*)

Ha ! art thou here, old remnant of the wars ?
Thou art not come to see this courtly show,
Which sets the young agape ?

Geof. I came not for the show ; and yet, methinks,

It were a better jest upon me still,
If thou didst truly know mine errand here.

Cit. I pri'thee say.

Geof. What, must I tell it thee ?
As o'er my evening fire I musing sat,
Some few days since, my mind's eye backward
turn'd

Upon the various changes I have pass'd —
How in my youth, with gay attire allur'd,
And all the grand accoutrements of war,
I left my peaceful home : Then my first battles,
When clashing arms, and sights of blood were
new :

Then all the after chances of the war :
Ay, and that field, a well-fought field it was,
When with an arm (I speak not of it oft)
Which now (*pointing to his empty sleeve*) thou
seest in no arm of mine,

In a straight pass I stopp'd a thousand foes,
And turn'd my flying comrades to the charge ;
For which good service, in his tented court,
My prince bestow'd a mark of favour on me ;
Whilst his fair consort, seated by his side,
The fairest lady e'er mine eyes beheld,
Gave me what more than all besides I priz'd, —
Methinks I see her still — a gracious smile —

'Twas a heart-kindling smile,—a smile of praise—
Well, musing thus on all my fortunes past,
A neighbour drew the latchet of my door,
And full of news from town, in many words
Big with rich names, told of this grand procession;
E'en as he spoke a fancy seiz'd my soul
To see the princess pass, if in her looks
I yet might trace some semblance of her mother.
This is the simple truth; laugh as thou wilt.
I came not for the show.

Enter an OFFICER.

Officer to Geof. Make way that the procession may have room :

Stand you aside, and let this man have place.

(Pushing Geof. and endeavouring to put another in his place.)

Geof. But that thou art the prince's officer,
I'd give thee back thy push with better blows.

Officer. What, wilt thou not give place? the prince is near :

I will complain to him, and have thee caged.

Geof. Yes, do complain, I pray; and when thou dost,

Say that the private of the tenth brigade,

Who sav'd his army on the Danube's bank,

And since that time a private hath remain'd,

Dares, as a citizen, his right maintain

Against thy insolence. Go tell him this,

And ask him then what dungeon of his tower

He'll have me thrust into.

Cit. to Officer. This is old Geoffry of the tenth brigade.

Offi. I knew him not : you should have told me sooner. [EXIT, *looking much ashamed.*

Martial Musick heard at a distance.

Cit. Hark, this is musick of a warlike kind.

Enter Second CITIZEN.

To Sec. Cit. What sounds are these, good friend, which this way bear ?

Sec. Cit. The brave Count Basil is upon his march,

To join the emp'rour with some chosen troops,
And as an ally doth through Mantua pass.

Geof. I've heard a good report of this young soldier.

Sec. Cit. 'Tissaid he disciplines his men severely,
And over-much the old commander is,
Which seems ungracious in so young a man.

Geof. I know he loves not ease and revelry ;
He makes them soldiers at no dearer rate
Than he himself hath paid. What, dost thou think,
That e'en the very meanest simple craft
Cannot without due diligence be learn'd,
And yet the nobler art of soldiership
May be attained by loit'ring in the sun ?
Some men are born to feast and not to fight ;
Whose sluggish minds, e'en in fair honour's field,
Still on their dinner turn —
Let such pot-boiling varlets stay at home,
And wield a flesh-hook rather than a sword.
In times of easy service, true it is,

An easy careless chief, all soldiers love ;
 But O ! how gladly in the day of battle
 Would they their jolly bottle-chief desert,
 And follow such a leader as Count Basil !
 So gath'ring herds, at pressing danger's call,
 Confess the master Deer.

(*Musick is heard again, and nearer. Geoffry walks up and down with a military triumphant step.*)

Cit. What moves thee thus ?

Geof. I've march'd to this same tune in
 glorious days.

My very limbs catch motion from the sound,
 As they were young again.

Sec. Cit.

But here they come.

Enter Count BASIL, Officers and Soldiers in Procession, with Colours flying, and martial musick. When they have marched half-way over the Stage, an Officer of the Duke's enters from the opposite side, and speaks to BASIL, upon which he gives a sign with his hand, and the martial musick ceases ; soft musick is heard at a little distance, and VICTORIA, with a long procession of Ladies, enters from the opposite side. The General, &c. pay obeisance to her, as she passes ; she stops to return it, and then goes off with her train. After which the military procession moves on, and Exeunt.

Cit. to Geof. What think'st thou of the princess?

Geof.

She is fair,

But not so fair as her good mother was. [EXEUNT.

SCENE II.

A Publick Walk on the Ramparts of the Town.

Enter COUNT ROSINBERG, VALTOMER, and FREDERICK. — VALTOMER enters by the opposite side of the Stage, and meets them.

Valt. O what a jolly town for way-worn soldiers!

Rich steaming pots, and smell of dainty fare,
From every house salutes you as you pass :
Light feats and juggler's tricks attract the eye ;
Musick and merriment in ev'ry street ;
Whilst pretty damsels in their best attire,
Trip on in wanton groups, then look behind,
To spy the fools a-gazing after them.

Fred. But short will be the season of our ease,
For Basil is of flinty matter made,
And cannot be allured—

'Faith, Rosinberg, I would thou didst command
us.

Thou art his kinsman, of a rank as noble,
Some years his elder too — How has it been
That he should be preferred ? I see not why.

Ros. Ah ! but I see it, and allow it well ;
He is too much my pride to wake my envy.

Fred. Nay, Count, it is thy foolish admiration
Which raises him to such superiour height ;
And truly thou hast so infected us,
That I at times have felt me aw'd before him,
I knew not why. 'Tis cursed folly this.

Thou art as brave, of as good parts as he.

Ros. Our talents of a diff'rent nature are ;
Mine for the daily intercourse of life,
And his for higher things.

Fred. Well, praise him as thou wilt ; I see it not ;
I'm sure I am as brave a man as he.

Ros. Yes, brave thou art, but 'tis subaltern
brav'ry,

And doth respect thyself. Thou'lt bleed as well,
Give and receive as deep a wound as he.

When Basil fights he wields a thousand swords ;
For 'tis their trust in his unshaken mind,
O'erwatching all the changes of the field,
Calm and inventive 'midst the battle's storm,
Which makes his soldiers bold. —

There have been those, in early manhood slain,
Whose great heroick souls have yet inspir'd
With such a noble zeal their gen'rous troops,
That to their latest day of bearing arms,
Their grey-hair'd soldiers have all dangers brav'd
Of desp'rate service, claim'd with boastful pride,
As those who fought beneath them in their youth.
Such men have been ; of whom it may be said,
Their spirits conquer'd when their clay was
cold.

Valt. Yes, I have seen in the eventful field,
When new occasion mock'd all rules of art,
E'en old commanders hold experience cheap,
And look to Basil ere his chin was dark.

Ros. One fault he has ; I know but only one ;
His too great love of military fame

Absorbs his thoughts, and makes him oft appear
Unsocial and severe.

Fred. Well, feel I not undaunted in the field?
As much enthusiastick love of glory?
Why am I not as good a man as he?

Ros. He's form'd for great occasions, thou for
small.

Valt. But small occasions in the path of life
Lie thickly sown, while great are rarely scatter'd.

Ros. By which you would infer that men like
Fred'rick

Should on the whole a better figure make,
Than men of higher parts. It is not so;
For some shew well, and fair applauses gain,
Where want of skill in other men is graceful.
Pray do not frown, good Fred'rick, no offence:
Thou canst not make a great man of thyself;
Yet wisely deign to use thy native pow'rs,
And prove an honour'd courtly gentleman.
But hush! no more of this; here Basil comes.

*Enter BASIL, who returns their salute without
speaking.*

Ros. What think'st thou, Valtomer, of Mantua's princess?

Valt. Fame prais'd her much, but hath not
prais'd her more

Than our better part the eye consents to.
With all that grace and nobleness of mien,
She might do honour to an emp'rour's throne;

She is too noble for a petty court.

Is it not so, my Lord? — (*To Basil, who only bows assent.*)

Nay, she demeans herself with so much grace,
Such easy state, such gay magnificence,
She should be queen of revelry and show.

Fred. She's charming as the goddess of delight.

Valt. But after her, she most attracted me
Who wore the yellow scarf and walk'd the last;
For tho' Victoria is a lovely woman —

Fred. Nay, it is treason but to call her woman;
She's a divinity, and should be worshipp'd.
But on my life, since now we talk of worship,
She worshipp'd Francis with right noble gifts!
They sparkled so with gold and precious gems —
Their value must be great; some thousand crowns.

Ros. I would not rate them at a price so mean;
The cup alone, with precious stones beset,
Would fetch a sum as great. That olive-branch
The princess bore herself, of fretted gold,
Was exquisitely wrought. I mark'd it more,
Because she held it in so white a hand.

Bas. (*in a quick voice.*) Mark'd you her hand?

I did not see her hand.

And yet she wav'd it twice.

Ros. It is a fair one, tho' you mark'd it not.

Valt. I wish some painter's eye had view'd the
group,

As she and all her lovely damsels pass'd;
He would have found wherewith t'enrich his art.

Ros. I wish so too; for oft their fancied beauties

Have so much cold perfection in their parts,
 'Tis plain they ne'er belong'd to flesh and blood.
 This is not truth, and doth not please so well
 As the varieties of lib'ral nature,
 Where ev'ry kind of beauty charms the eye ;
 Large and small featur'd, flat and prominent,
 Ay, by the mass ! and snub-nos'd beauties too.
 'Faith, ev'ry woman hath some witching charm,
 If that she be not proud, or captious.

Valt. Demure, or over-wise, or giv'n to freaks.

Ros. Or giv'n to freaks ! hold, hold, good
 Valtomer !

Thou'lt leave no woman handsome under heav'n.

Valt. But I must leave you for an hour or so ;
 I mean to view the town.

Fred. I'll go with thee.

Ros. And so will I.

[*EXEUNT Valt. Fred. and Ros.*]

Re-enter ROSINBERG.

Ros. I have repented me, I will not go ;
 They will be too long absent. — (*Pauses, and
 looks at Basil, who remains still musing
 without seeing him.*)

What mighty thoughts engage my pensive friend ?

Bas. O it is admirable !

Ros. How runs thy fancy ? what is admirable ?

Bas. Her form, her face, her motion, ev'ry thing !

Ros. The princess ; yes, have we not prais'd
 her much ?

Bas. I know you prais'd her, and her off'rings
 too !

She might have giv'n the treasures of the east,
Ere I had known it.

O! didst thou mark her when she first appear'd?
Still distant, slowly moving with her train;
Her robe and tresses floating on the wind,
Like some light figure in a morning cloud?
Then, as she onward to the eye became
The more distinct, how lovelier still she grew!
That graceful bearing of her slender form;
Her roundly spreading breast, her tow'ring neck,
Her faceting'd sweetly with the bloom of youth—
But when approaching near, she tow'rds us turn'd,
Kind mercy! what a countenance was there!
And when to our salute she gently bow'd,
Didst mark that smile rise from her parting lips?
Soft swell'd her glowing cheek, her eyes smil'd too?
O how they smil'd! 'twas like the beams of heav'n!
I felt my roused soul within me start,
Like something wak'd from sleep.

Ros. The beams of heav'n do many slumb'ers
wake

To care and misery!

Bas. There's something grave and solemn in
your voice

As you pronounce these words. What dost thou
mean?

Thou wouldst not sound my knell?

Ros. No, not for all beneath the vaulted sky!
But to be plain, thus warmly from your lips,
Her praise displeases me. To men like you,
If love should come, he proves no easy guest.

Bas. What, dost thou think I am beside myself,
And cannot view the fairness of perfection
With that delight which lovely beauty gives,
Without tormenting me with fruitless wishes,
Like the poor child who sees its brighten'd face,
And whimpers for the moon? Thou art not
serious.

From early youth, war has my mistress been,
And tho' a rugged one, I'll constant prove,
And not forsake her now. There may be joys
Which, to the strange o'erwhelming of the soul,
Visit the lover's breast beyond all others;
E'en now, how dearly do I feel there may!
But what of them? they are not made for me —
The hasty flashes of contending steel
Must serve instead of glances from my love,
And for soft breathing sighs the cannon's roar.

Ros. (taking his hand.) Now am I satisfied.
Forgive me, Basil.

Bas. I'm glad thou art; we'll talk of her no
more;

Why should I vex my friend?

Ros. Thou hast not issued orders for the march.

Bas. I'll do it soon; thou need'st not be afraid.
To-morrow's sun shall bear us far from hence,
Never perhaps to pass these gates again.

Ros. With last night's close, did you not curse
this town

That would one single day your troops retard?
And now, methinks, you talk of leaving it,
As tho' it were the place that gave you birth;

As tho' you had around these strangers' walls
Your infant gambols play'd.

Bas. The sight of what may be but little priz'd,
Doth cause a solemn sadness in the mind,
When view'd as that we ne'er shall see again.

Ros. No, not a whit to wandering men like us.
No, not a whit! What custom hath endear'd
We part with sadly, tho' we prize it not :
But what is new some powerful charm must own,
Thus to affect the mind.

Bas. (*hastily.*) We'll let it pass — It hath no
consequence :
Thou art impatient.

Ros. I'm not impatient. 'Faith, I only wish
Some other route our destin'd march had been,
That still thou mightst thy glorious course pursue
With an untroubled mind.

Bas. O! wish it, wish it not ! bless'd be that
route !

What we have seen to-day, I must remember —
I should be brutish if I could forget it.
Oft in the watchful post, or weary march,
Oft in the nightly silence of my tent,
My fixed mind shall gaze upon it still ;
But it will pass before my fancy's eye,
Like some delightful vision of the soul,
To soothe, not trouble it.

Ros. What! 'midst the dangers of eventful war,
Still let thy mind be haunted by a woman ?
Who would, perhaps, hear of thy fall in battle,
As Dutchmen read of earthquakes in Calabria,

And never stop to cry "alack a-day!"
For me there is but one of all the sex,
Who still shall hold her station in my breast,
'Midst all the changes of inconstant fortune;
Because I'm passing sure she loves me well,
And for my sake a sleepless pillow finds
When rumour tells bad tidings of the war;
Because I know her love will never change,
Nor make me prove uneasy jealousy.

Bas. Happy art thou! who is this wondrous woman?

Ros. It is mine own good mother, faith and truth!

Bas. (*smiling.*) Give me thy hand; I love her dearly too.

Rivals we are not, tho' our love is one.

Ros. And yet I might be jealous of her love,
For she bestows too much of it on thee,
Who hast no claim but to a nephew's share.

Bas. (*going.*) I'll meet thee some time hence.
I must to Court.

Ros. A private conf'rence will not stay thee long.

I'll wait thy coming near the palace gate.

Bas. 'Tis to the publick court I mean to go.

Ros. I thought you had determin'd otherwise.

Bas. Yes, but on farther thought it did appear
As tho' it would be failing in respect
At such a time — That look doth wrong me,
Rosinberg!

For on my life, I had determin'd thus,
Ere I beheld — Before we enter'd Mantua.

But wilt thou change that soldier's dusty garb,
And go with me thyself?

Ros. Yes, I will go.

(*As they are going Ros. stops, and looks at Basil.*)

Bas. Why dost thou stop?

Ros. 'Tis for my wonted caution,
Which first thou gav'st me—I shall ne'er forget it!
'Twas at Vienna, on a public day;
Thou but a youth, I then a man full form'd;
Thy stripling's brow grac'd with its first cockade,
Thy mighty bosom swell'd with mighty thoughts.
Thou'rt for the court, dear Rosinberg, quoth thou!
“Now pray thee be not caught with some gay
dame,

To laugh and ogle, and befool thyself:
It is offensive in the publick eye,
And suits not with a man of thy endowments.”
So said your serious lordship to me then,
And have on like occasions, often since,
In other terms repeated.—

But I must go to-day without my caution.

Bas. Nay, Rosinberg, I am impatient now:
Did I not say we'd talk of her no more?

Ros. Well, my good friend, God grant we
keep our word!

[EXEUNT.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

Note.—My first idea when I wrote this play, was to represent Basil as having seen Victoria for the first time in the procession, that I might shew more perfectly the passion

from its first beginning, and also its sudden power over the mind; but I was induced, from the criticism of one, whose judgment I very much respect, to alter it, and represent him as having formerly seen and loved her. The first Review that took notice of this work objected to Basil's having seen her before as a defect; and, as we are all easily determined to follow our own opinion, I have, upon after-consideration, given the play in this edition [*third*], as far as this is concerned, exactly in its original state. Strong internal evidence of this will be discovered by any one, who will take the trouble of reading attentively the second scenes of the first and second acts in the present and former editions of this book. Had Basil seen and loved Victoria before, his first speech, in which he describes her to Rosinberg as walking in the procession, would not be natural; and there are, I think, other little things besides, which will shew that the circumstance of his former meeting with her is an interpolation.

The blame of this, however, I take entirely upon myself: the Critick, whose opinion I have mentioned, judged of the piece entirely as an unconnected play, and knew nothing of the general plan of this work, which ought to have been communicated to him. Had it been, indeed, an unconnected play, and had I put this additional circumstance to it with proper judgment and skill, I am inclined to think it would have been an improvement.

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *A Room of State. The DUKE of MANTUA, BASIL, ROSINBERG, and a number of Courtiers, Attendants, &c. The DUKE and BASIL appear talking together on the front of the Stage.*

Duke. But our opinions differ widely there;
From the position of the rival armies,
I cannot think they'll join in battle soon.

Bas. I am indeed beholden to your highness,
But tho' unwillingly, we must depart.
The foes are near, the time is critical;
A soldier's reputation is too fine,
To be expos'd e'en to the smallest cloud.

Duke. An untried soldier's is; but yours, my
lord,
Nurs'd with the bloody show'rs of many a field,
And brightest sunshine of successful fortune,
A plant of such a hardy stem hath grown,
E'en Envy's sharpest blasts assail it not.
Yet after all, by the bless'd holy Cross!
I feel too warm an interest in the cause
To stay your progress here a single hour,
Did I not know your soldiers are fatigu'd,
And two days' rest would much recruit their
strength.

Bas. Your highness will be pleas'd to pardon me;
My troops are not o'ermarch'd, and one day's rest
Is all our needs require.

Duke. Ah! hadst thou come

Unfetter'd with the duties of command,
I then had well retain'd thee for my guest,
With claims too strong, too sacred for denial.
Thy noble sire my fellow-soldier was ;
Together many a rough campaign we serv'd ;
I lov'd him well, and much it pleases me
A son of his beneath my roof to see.

Bas. Were I indeed free master of myself,
Strong inclination would detain me here ;
No other tie were wanting.
These gracious tokens of your princely favour
I'll treasure with my best remembrances ;
For he who shews them for my father's sake,
Does something sacred in his kindness bear,
As tho' he shed a blessing on my head.

Duke. Well, bear my greetings to the brave
Piscaro,
And say how warmly I embrace the cause.
Your third day's march will to his presence bring
Your valiant troops : said you not so, my lord ?

*Enter VICTORIA, the COUNTESS of ALBINI,
ISABELLA, and LADIES.*

Bas. (*who changes countenance upon seeing them.*)
Yes, I believe—I think—I know not well—
Yes, please your grace, we march by break of day.

Duke. Nay, that I know. I ask'd you, noble
Count,
When you expect th' Imperial force to join.

Bas. When it shall please your grace—I crave
your pardon—

I somewhat have mistaken of your words.

Duke. You are not well? your colour changes,
Count,

What is the matter?

Bas. A dizzy mist that swims before my sight —
A ringing in my ears — 'tis strange enough —
'Tis slight — 'tis nothing worth — 'tis gone already.

Duke. I'm glad it is. Look to your friend,
Count Rosinberg,

It may return again — (*To Rosinberg, who stands
at a little distance, looking earnestly at Basil. —*

Duke leaves them, and joins Victoria's party.)

Ros. Good heavens, Basil, is it thus with thee!
Thy hand shakes too: (*taking his hand.*)

Would we were far from hence!

Bas. I'm well again, thou need'st not be afraid.
'Tis like enough my frame is indispos'd
With some slight weakness from our weary march.
Nay, look not on me thus, it is unkindly —
I cannot bear thine eyes.

*The DUKE, with VICTORIA and her Ladies, ad-
vance to the front of the Stage to BASIL.*

Duke. Victoria, welcome here the brave
Count Basil.

His kinsman too, the gallant Rosinberg.
May you, and these fair ladies so prevail,
Such gentle suitors cannot plead in vain,
To make them grace my court another day.
I shall not be offended when I see
Your power surpasses mine.

Vict. Our feeble efforts will presumptuous seem
Attempting that in which your highness fails.

Duke. There's honour in th' attempt; success
attend ye. — (*Duke retires, and mixes with
the Courtiers at the bottom of the Stage.*)

Vict. I fear we incommoded you, my Lord,
With the slow tedious length of our procession.
E'en as I pass'd, against my heart it went
To stop so long upon their weary way
Your tired troops. —

Bas. Ah! Madam, all too short!
Time never bears such moments on his wing,
But when he flies too swiftly to be mark'd.

Vict. Ah! surely then you make too good
amends

By marking now his after-progress well.
To-day must seem a weary length to him
Who is so eager to be gone to-morrow.

Ros. They must not linger who would quit
these walls;
For if they do, a thousand masked foes;
Some under show of rich luxurious feasts,
Gay, sprightly pastime, and high-zested game; —
Nay, some, my gentle ladies, true it is,
The very worst and fellest of the crew,
In fair alluring shape of beauteous dames,
Do such a barrier form t' oppose their way
As few men may o'ercome.

Isab. From this last wicked foe should we infer
Yourself have suffer'd much?

Albin. No, Isabella, these are common words,

To please you with false notions of your pow'r.
So all men talk of ladies and of love.

Vict. 'Tis even so. If love a tyrant be,
How dare his humble chained votaries
To tell such rude and wicked tales of him ?

Bas. Because they most of lover's ills complain,
Who but affect it as a courtly grace,
Whilst he who feels is silent.

Ros. But there you wrong me ; I have felt it oft.
Oft has it made me sigh at ladies' feet,
Soft ditties sing, and dismal sonnets scrawl.

Albin. In all its strange effects, most worthy
Rosinberg,

Has it e'er made thee in a corner sit,
Sad, lonely, moping sit, and hold thy tongue ?

Ros. No, 'faith, it never has.

Albin. Ha, ha, ha, ha ! then thou hast never lov'd.

Ros. Nay, but I have, and felt love's bondage too.

Vict. Fye ! it is pedantry to call it bondage !
Love-marring wisdom, reason full of bars,
Deserve, methinks, that appellation more.
Is it not so, my Lord ? — (*To Basil.*)

Bas. O surely, Madam !
That is not bondage which the soul enthrall'd
So gladly bears, and quits not but with anguish.
Stern honour's laws, the fair report of men,
These are the fetters that enchain the mind,
But such as must not, cannot be unloos'd.

Vict. No, not unloos'd, but yet one day relax'd,
To grant a lady's suit, unus'd to sue.

Ros. Your highness deals severely with us now,

And proves indeed our freedom is but small,
Who are constrain'd, when such a lady sues,
To say, it cannot be.

Vict. It cannot be! Count Basil says not so.

Ros. For that I am his friend, to save him pain
I take th' ungracious office on myself.

Vict. How ill thy face is suited to thine office!

Ros. (*smiling.*) Would I could suit mine office
to my face,

If that would please your highness.

Vict. No, you are obstinate and perverse all,
And would not grant it if you had the pow'r.
Albini, I'll retire; come, Isabella.

Bas. (*aside to Ros.*) Ah, Rosinberg! thou
hast too far presum'd;

She is offended with us.

Ros. No, she is not —

What dost thou fear? be firm, and let us go.

Vict. (*pointing to a door leading to other apartments, by which she is ready to go out.*)

These are apartments strangers' love to see:
Some famous paintings do their walls adorn:
They lead you also to the palace court
As quickly as the way by which you came.

[EXIT *Vict.* led out by *Ros.*, and followed by *Isab.*

Bas. (*aside, looking after them.*) O! what a fool
am I! where fled my thoughts?

I might as well as he, now, by her side,
Have held her precious hand enclos'd in mine?
As well as he, who cares not for it neither.
O but he does! that were impossible!

Albin. You stay behind, my lord.

Bas. Your pardon, Madam; honour me so far —
[EXEUNT, *handing out* Albini.

SCENE II.

A Gallery hung with Pictures. VICTORIA *discovered in conversation with* ROSINBERG, BASIL, ALBINI, *and* ISABELLA.

Vict. (to Ros.) It is indeed a work of wondrous art.

(To Isab.) You call'd Francisco here?

Isab. He comes even now.

Enter ATTENDANT.

Vict. (to Ros.) He will conduct you to the northern gall'ry ;

Its striking shades will call upon the eye,
To point its place there needs no other guide.

[EXEUNT *Ros. and Attendant.*

(To Bas.) Loves not Count Basil too this charming art?

It is in ancient painting much admir'd.

Bas. Ah! do not banish me these few short moments :

Too soon they will be gone! for ever gone!

Vict. If they are precious to you, say not so,
But add to them another precious day.

A Lady asks it.

Bas. Ah, Madam! ask the life-blood from my heart!

Ask all but what a soldier may not give.

Vict. 'Tis ever thus when favours are denied;
All had been granted but the thing we beg;
And still some great unlikely substitute,
Your life, your soul, your all of earthly good,
Is proffer'd in the room of one small boon.
So keep your life-blood, gen'rous, valiant lord,
And may it long your noble heart enrich,
Until I wish it shed. (*Bas. attempts to speak.*)

Nay, frame no new excuse;
I will not hear it.

(*She puts out her hand as if she would shut his mouth, but at a distance from it; Bas. runs eagerly up to her, and presses it to his lips.*)

Bas. Let this sweet hand indeed its threat perform.

And make it heav'n to be for ever dumb!

(*Vict. looks stately and offended—Basil kneels.*)

O pardon me! I know not what I do.

Frown not, reduce me not to wretchedness;

But only grant —

Vict. What should I grant to him,
Who has so oft my earnest suit denied?

Bas. By heav'n I'll grant it! I'll do any thing:
Say but thou art no more offended with me.

Vict. (raising him.) Well, Basil, this good promise is thy pardon.

I will not wait your noble friend's return,
Since we shall meet again. —

You will perform your word?

Bas. I will perform it.

Vict. Farewell, my lord.

[EXIT, with her Ladies.]

Bas. (alone.) “Farewell, my lord.” O! what delightful sweetness!

The musick of that voice dwells on the ear!

“Farewell, my lord!” — Ay, and then look’d she so —

The slightest glance of her bewitching eye,
Those dark blue eyes, commands the inmost soul.

Well, there is yet one day of life before me,

And, whatsoe’er betide, I will enjoy it.

Tho’ but a partial sunshine in my lot,

I will converse with her, gaze on her still,

If all behind were pain and misery.

Pain! Were it not the easing of all pain,

E’en in the dismal gloom of after years,

Such dear remembrance on the mind to wear,

Like silv’ry moon-beams on the ’nighted deep,

When heav’n’s blest sun is gone?

Kind mercy! how my heart within me beat

When she so sweetly pled the cause of love!

Can she have lov’d? why shrink I at the thought?

Why should she not? no, no, it cannot be —

No man on earth is worthy of her love.

Ah! if she could, how blest a man were he!

Where rove my giddy thoughts? it must not be.

Yet might she well some gentle kindness bear;

Think of him oft, his absent fate inquire,

And, should he fall in battle, mourn his fall.

Yes, she would mourn — such love might she
bestow;

And poor of soul the man who would exchange it

For warmest love of the most loving dame!

But here comes Rosinberg — have I done well?
He will not say I have.

Enter ROSINBERG.

Ros. Where is the princess?

I'm sorry I return'd not ere she went.

Bas. You'll see her still.

Ros. What, comes she forth again?

Bas. She does to-morrow.

Ros. Thou hast yielded then.

Bas. Come, Rosinberg, I'll tell thee as we go:
It was impossible I should not yield.

Ros. O Basil! thou art weaker than a child.

Bas. Yes, yes, my friend, but 'tis a noble
weakness.

A weakness which hath greater things achiev'd
Than all the firm determin'd strength of reason.
By heav'n! I feel a new-born pow'r within me,
Shall make me twenty-fold the man I've been
Before this fated day.

Ros. Fated indeed! but an ill-fated day,
That makes thee other than thy former self.
Yet let it work its will; it cannot change thee
To ought I shall not love.

Bas. Thanks, Rosinberg! thou art a noble
heart!

I would not be the man thou couldst not love
For an Imperial Crown.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE III.

A Small Apartment in the Palace.

Enter DUKE and GAURIECIO.

Duke. The point is gain'd ; my daughter is
successful ;

And Basil is detain'd another day.

Gaur. But does the princess know your secret
aim ?

Duke. No, that had marr'd the whole ; she is
a woman ;

Her mind, as suits the sex, too weak and narrow
To relish deep-laid schemes of policy.

Besides, so far unlike a child of mine,
She holds its subtle arts in high derision,
And will not serve us but with bandag'd eyes.

Gauriecio, could I trusty servants find,
Experienc'd, crafty, close, and unrestrain'd
By silly superstitious child-learnt fears,
What might I not effect ?

Gaur. O any thing !

The deep and piercing genius of your highness,
So ably serv'd, might e'en achieve the empire.

Duke. No, no, my friend, thou dost o'erprize
my parts ;

Yet mighty things might be — deep subtle wits,
In truth, are master spirits in the world.

The brave man's courage, and the student's lore,
Are but as tools his secret ends to work,
Who hath the skill to use them.

This brave Count Basil, dost thou know him well ?
Much have we gain'd, but for a single day,
At such a time, to hold his troops detain'd ;
When, by that secret message of our spy,
The rival pow'rs are on the brink of action :
But might we more effect ? Know'st thou this
Basil ?

Might he be tamper'd with ?

Gaur. That were most dang'rous. —
He is a man, whose sense of right and wrong
To such a high romantick pitch is wound,
And all so hot and fiery in his nature,
The slightest hint, as tho' you did suppose
Baseness and treach'ry in him, so he'll deem it,
Would be to rouse a flame that might destroy.

Duke. But int'rest, int'rest, man's all-ruling
pow'r,
Will tame the hottest spirit to your service,
And skilfully applied, mean service too ;
E'en as there is an element in nature
Which, when subdu'd, will on your hearth fulfil
The lowest uses of domestick wants.

Gaur. Earth-kindled fire, which from a little
spark,
On hidden fuel feeds his growing strength,
Till o'er the lofty fabrick it aspires
And rages out its pow'r, may be subdu'd,
And in your base domestick service bound ;
But who would madly in its wild career
The fire of heav'n arrest to boil his pot ?
No, Basil will not serve your secret schemes,

Tho' you had all to give ambition strives for.
We must beware of him.

Duke. His father was my friend, — I wish'd
to gain him :

But since fantastick fancies bind him thus,
The sin be on his head ; I stand acquitted,
And must deceive him, even to his ruin.

Gaur. I have prepar'd Bernardo for your service;
To-night he will depart for th' Austrian camp,
And should he find them on the eve of battle,
I've bid him wait the issue of the field.
If that our secret friends victorious prove,
With th' arrow's speed he will return again :
But should fair Fortune crown Piscaro's arms,
Then shall your soothing message greet his ears ;
For till our friends some sound advantage gain,
Our actions still must wear an Austrian face.

Duke. Well hast thou school'd him. Didst
thou add withal,
That, 'tis my will he garnish well his speech,
With honied words of the most dear regard,
And friendly love I bear him ? This is needful ;
And lest my slowness in the promis'd aid
Awake suspicion, bid him e'en rehearse
The many favours on my house bestow'd
By his Imperial master, as a theme
On which my gratitude delights to dwell.

Gaur. I have, an' please your highness.

Duke. Then 'tis well.

Gaur. But for the yielding up that little fort
There could be no suspicion.

Duke. My Governor I have severely punish'd,
As a most daring traitor to my orders.
He cannot from his darksome dungeon tell ;
Why then should they suspect ?

Gaur. He must not live should Charles prove
victorious.

Duke. He's done me service ; say not so,
Gauriecio.

Gaur. A traitor's name he will not calmly bear ;
He'll tell his tale aloud — he must not live.

Duke. Well, if it must — we'll talk of this again.

Gaur. But while with anxious care and crafty
wiles,

You would enlarge the limits of your state,
Your highness must beware lest inward broils
Bring danger near at hand : your northern subjects
E'en now are discontented and unquiet.

Duke. What, dare the ungrateful miscreants
thus return

The many favours of my princely grace ?
'Tis ever thus : indulgence spoils the base ;
Raising up pride, and lawless turbulence,
Like noxious vapours from the fulsome marsh
When morning shines upon it. —
Did I not lately with parental care,
When dire invaders their destruction threaten'd,
Provide them all with means of their defence ?
Did I not, as a mark of gracious trust,
A body of their vagrant youth select
To guard my sacred person ? till that day
An honour never yet allow'd their race.

Did I not suffer them, upon their suit,
T' establish manufactures in their towns?
And after all some chosen soldiers spare
To guard the blessings of interiour peace?

Gaur. Nay, please your highness, they do
well allow,

That when your enemies, in fell revenge,
Your former inroads threaten'd to repay,
Their ancient arms you did to them restore,
With kind permission to defend themselves :
That so far have they felt your princely grace,
In drafting from their fields their goodliest youth
To be your servants : That you did vouchsafe,
On paying of a large and heavy fine,
Leave to apply the labour of their hands
As best might profit to the country's weal :
And to encourage well their infant trade,
Quarter'd your troops upon them. — Please
your grace,
All this they do most readily allow.

Duke. They do allow it then, ungrateful varlets!
What would they have? what would they have,
Gauriecio?

Gaur. Some mitigation of their grievous
burdens,
Which, like an iron weight around their necks,
Do bend their care-worn faces to the earth,
Like creatures form'd upon its soil to creep,
Not stand erect, and view the sun of heav'n.

Duke. But they beyond their proper sphere
would rise ;

Let them their lot fulfil as we do ours.
Society of various parts is form'd ;
They are its grounds, its mud, its sediment,
And we the mantling top which crowns the
whole.

Calm, steady labour is their greatest bliss ;
To aim at higher things beseems them not.
To let them work in peace my care shall be ;
To slacken labour is to nourish pride.
Methinks thou art a pleader for these fools :
What may this mean, Gauriecio ?

Gaur. They were resolv'd to lay their cause
before you,
And would have found some other advocate
Less pleasing to your Grace, had I refus'd.

Duke. Well, let them know, some more convenient season
I'll think of this, and do for them as much
As suits the honour of my princely state.
Their prince's honour should be ever dear
To worthy subjects as their precious lives.

Gaur. I fear, unless you give some special
promise,
They will be violent still —

Duke. Then do it, if the wretches are so bold ;
We can retract it when the times allow ;
'Tis of small consequence. Go see Bernardo,
And come to me again. [EXIT.

Gaur. (solus.) O happy people ! whose indulgent lord
From ev'ry care, with which increasing wealth,

With all its hopes and fears, doth ever move
The human breast, most graciously would free,
And kindly leave you nought to do but toil !
This creature now, with all his reptile cunning,
Writhing and turning thro' a maze of wiles,
Believes his genius form'd to rule mankind ;
And calls his sordid wish for territory
That noblest passion of the soul, ambition.
Born had he been to follow some low trade,
A petty tradesman still he had remain'd,
And us'd the art with which he rules a state
To circumvent his brothers of the craft,
Or cheat the buyers of his paltry ware.
And yet he thinks, — ha, ha, ha, ha ! — he thinks
I am the tool and servant of his will.
Well, let it be ; thro' all the maze of trouble
His plots and base oppression must create,
I'll shape myself a way to higher things :
And who will say 'tis wrong ?
A sordid being, who expects no faith
But as self-interest binds ; who would not trust
The strongest ties of nature on the soul,
Deserves no faithful service. Perverse fate !
Were I like him, I would despise this dealing ;
But being as I am, born low in fortune,
Yet with a mind aspiring to be great,
I must not scorn the steps which lead to it :
And if they are not right, no saint am I ;
I follow nature's passion in my breast,
Which urges me to rise in spite of fortune.

[EXIT.]

SCENE IV.

An Apartment in the Palace. VICTORIA and ISABELLA are discovered playing at Chess ; the Countess ALBINI sitting by them reading to herself.

Vict. Away with it, I will not play again.
May men no more be foolish in my presence
If thou art not a cheat, an arrant cheat !

Isab. To swear that I am false by such an oath,
Should prove me honest, since its forfeiture
Would bring your highness gain.

Vict. Thou'rt wrong, my Isabella, simple maid ;
For in the very forfeit of this oath,
There's death to all the dearest pride of women.
May man no more be foolish in my presence !

Isab. And does your grace, hail'd by applaud-
ing crowds,
In all the graceful eloquence address'd
Of most accomplish'd, noble, courtly youths,
Prais'd in the songs of heav'n-inspired bards,
Those awkward proofs of admiration prize,
Which rustick swains their village fair ones pay !

Vict. O, love will master all the power of art !
Ay, all ! and she who never has beheld
The polish'd courtier, or the tuneful sage,
Before the glances of her conqu'ring eye
A very native simple swain become,
Has only vulgar charms.

To make the cunning artless, tame the rude,
Subdue the haughty, shake th' undaunted soul ;

Yea, put a bridle in the lion's mouth,
And lead him forth as a domestick cur,
These are the triumphs of all-powerful beauty !
Did nought but flatt'ring words and tuneful praise,
Sighs, tender glances, and obsequious service,
Attend her presence, it were nothing worth :
I'd put a white coif o'er my braided locks,
And be a plain, good, simple, fire-side dame.

Alb. (*raising her head from her book.*) And is,
indeed, a plain domestick dame,
Who fills the duties of an useful state,
A being of less dignity than she,
Who vainly on her transient beauty builds
A little poor ideal tyranny ?

Isab. Ideal too !

Alb. Yes, most unreal pow'r ;
For she who only finds her self-esteem
In others' admiration, begs an alms ;
Depends on others for her daily food,
And is the very servant of her slaves ;
Tho' oftentimes, in a fantastick hour,
O'er men she may a childish pow'r exert,
Which not ennobles, but degrades her state.

Vict. You are severe, Albini, most severe :
Were human passions plac'd within the breast
But to be curb'd, subdu'd, pluck'd by the roots ?
All heaven's gifts to some good end were giv'n.

Alb. Yes, for a noble, for a generous end.

Vict. Am I ungen'rous then ?

Alb. Yes, most ungen'rous !
Who, for the pleasure of a little pow'r,

Would give most unavailing pain to those
Whose love you ne'er can recompense again.
E'en now, to-day, O! was it not ungen'rous
To fetter Basil with a foolish tie,

Against his will, perhaps against his duty?

Vict. What, dost thou think against his will,
my friend?

Alb. Full sure I am against his reason's will.

Vict. Ah! but indeed thou must excuse me here;
For duller than a shelled crab were she,
Who could suspect her pow'r in such a mind,
And calmly leave it doubtful and unprov'd.
But wherefore dost thou look so gravely on me?
Ah! well I read those looks! methinks they say,
"Your mother did not so."

Alb. Your highness reads them true, she did
not so.

If foolish vanity e'er soil'd her thoughts,
She kept it low, withheld its aliment;
Not pamper'd it with ev'ry motley food,
From the fond tribute of a noble heart
To the lisp'd flattery of a cunning child.

Vict. Nay, speak not thus, Albini, speak not thus
Of little blue-eyed, sweet, fair-hair'd Mirando.
He is the orphan of a hapless pair,
A loving, beautiful, but hapless pair,
Whose story is so pleasing, and so sad,
The swains have turn'd it to a plaintive lay,
And sing it as they tend their mountain sheep.
Besides, (*to Isab.*) I am the guardian of his choice.
When first I saw him—dost thou not remember?

Isab. 'Twas in the publick garden.

Vict. Even so ;

Perch'd in his nurse's arms, a roughsome quean,
Ill suited to the lovely charge she bore.

How stedfastly he fix'd his looks upon me,
His dark eyes shining thro' forgotten tears,
Then stretch'd his little arms and call'd me mother!
What could I do? I took the bantling home—
I could not tell the imp he had no mother.

Alb. Ah! there, my child, thou hast indeed
no blame.

Vict. Now this is kindly said: thanks, sweet
Albini!

Still call me child, and chide me as thou wilt.
O! would that I were such as thou could'st love!
Couldst dearly love, as thou didst love my mother!

Alb. (*pressing her to her breast.*) And do I not?
all-perfect as she was,

I know not that she went so near my heart
As thou with all thy faults,

Vict. And say'st thou so? would I had sooner
known!

I had done any thing to give thee pleasure.

Alb. Then do so now, and put thy faults away.

Vict. No, say not faults; the freaks of thought-
less youth.

Alb. Nay, very faults they must indeed be call'd.

Vict. O! say but foibles! youthful foibles only!

Alb. Faults, faults, real faults you must confess
they are.

Vict. In truth I cannot do your sense the wrong
To think so poorly of the one you love.

Alb. I must be gone: thou hast o'ercome me now:
Another time I will not yield it so. [EXIT.

Isab. The Countess is severe, she's too severe:
She once was young tho' now advanc'd in years.

Vict. No, I deserve it all: she is most worthy.
Unlike those faded beauties of the court,
But now the wither'd stems of former flowers
With all their blossoms shed, her nobler mind
Procures to her the privilege of man,
Ne'er to be old till nature's strength decays.
Some few years hence, if I should live so long,
I'd be Albini rather than myself.

Isab. Here comes your little fav'rite.

Vict. I am not in the humour for him now.

*Enter MIRANDO, running up to VICTORIA, and
taking hold of her gown, whilst she takes no notice
of him, as he holds up his mouth to be kissed.*

Isab. (to *Mir.*) Thou seest the princess can't
be troubled with thee.

Mir. O but she will! I'll scramble up her robe,
As naughty boys do when they climb for apples.

Isab. Come here, sweet child; I'll kiss thee in
her stead.

Mir. Nay, but I will not have a kiss of thee.
Would I were tall! O were I but so tall!

Isab. And how tall wouldst thou be?

Mir. Thou dost not know?
Just tall enough to reach Victoria's lips.

Vict. (embracing him.) O! I must bend to this,
thou little urchin.

Who taught thee all this wit, this childish wit?

Who does Mirando love? (*embraces him again.*)

Mir. He loves Victoria.

Vict. And wherefore loves he her?

Mir. Because she's pretty.

Isab. Hast thou no little prate to-day, Mirando?

No tale to earn a sugar-plumb withal?

Mir. Ay, that I have: I know who loves her grace.

Vict. Who is it pray? thou shalt have comfits for it.

Mir. (*looking slyly at her.*) It is — it is — it is the Count of Maldo.

Vict. Away, thou little chit! that tale is old, And was not worth a sugar-plumb when new.

Mir. Well then, I know who loves her highness well.

Vict. Who is it then

Isab. Who is it, naughty boy?

Mir. It is the handsome marquis of Carlatzi.

Vict. No, no, Mirando, thou art naughty still: Twice have I paid thee for that tale already.

Mir. Well then, indeed — I know who loves Victoria.

Vict. And who is he?

Mir. It is Mirando's self.

Vict. Thou little imp! this story is not new, But thou shalt have thy hire. Come, let us go. Go, run before us, Boy.

Mir. Nay, but I'll shew you how Count Wolvar look'd,

When he conducted Isabel from Court.

Vict. How did he look ?

Mir. Give me your hand : he held his body thus :
(*putting himself in a ridiculous bowing posture.*)

And then he whisper'd softly ; then look'd so ;
(*ogling with his eyes affectedly.*)

Then she look'd so, and smil'd to him again.
(*throwing down his eyes affectedly.*)

Isab. Thou art a little knave, and must be
whipp'd.

[*EXEUNT. Mirando, leading out Victoria affectedly.*

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *An open Street, or Square.*

*Enter ROSINBERG and FREDERICK, by opposite
sides of the Stage.*

Fred. So Basil, from the pressing calls of war,
Another day to rest and pastime gives.
How is it now ? methinks thou art not pleas'd.

Ros. It matters little if I am or not.

Fred. Now pray thee do confess thou art asham'd :
Thou, who art wisely wont to set at nought
The noble fire of individual courage,
And call calm prudence the superior virtue,
What sayst thou now, my candid Rosinberg,
When thy great captain, in a time like this,
Denies his weary troops one day of rest
Before the exertions of approaching battle,
Yet grants it to a pretty lady's suit ?

Ros. Who told thee this ? it was no friendly tale ;

And no one else, besides a trusty friend,
Could know his motives. Then thou wrongst
me too ;

For I admire, as much as thou dost, Fred'rick,
The fire of valour, e'en rash heedless valour ;
But not like thee do I depreciate
That far superiour, yea that god-like talent,
Which doth direct that fire, because indeed
It is a talent nature has denied me.

Fred. Well, well, and greatly he may boast
his virtue,

Who risks perhaps th' Imperial army's fate,
To please a lady's freaks —

Ros. Go, go, thou'rt prejudic'd :
A passion which I do not chuse to name,
Has warp'd thy judgement.

Fred. No, by heav'n, thou wrongst me !
I do, with most enthusiastick warmth,
True valour love : wherever he is found,
I love the hero too ; but hate to see
The praises due to him so cheaply earn'd.

Ros. Then mayst thou now these gen'rous
feelings prove.

Behold that man, whose short and grizzly hair,
In clust'ring locks his dark brown face o'ershades ;
Where now the scars of former sabre wounds,
In hon'rab!e companionship are seen
With the deep lines of age ; whose piercing eye
Beneath its shading eye-brow keenly darts
Its yet unquenched beams, as tho' in age

Its youthful fire had been again renew'd,
To be the guardian of its darken'd mate.
See with what vig'rous steps his upright form
He onward bears ; nay, e'en that vacant sleeve,
Which droops so sadly by his better side,
Suits not ungracefully the vet'ran's mien.
This is the man, whose glorious acts in battle,
We heard to-day related o'er our wine.
I go to tell the Gen'ral he is come :
Enjoy the gen'rous feelings of thy breast,
And make an old man happy. [EXIT.

Enter GEOFFRY.

Fred. Brave soldier, let me profit by the chance
That led me here ; I've heard of thy exploits.

Geof. Ah ! then you have but heard an ancient
tale,
Which has been long forgotten.

Fred. But true it is, and should not be forgotten ;
Tho' Gen'rals, jealous of their soldiers' fame,
May dash it with neglect.

Geof. There are, perhaps, who may be so
ungen'rous.

Fred. Perhaps, sayst thou ? in very truth there are.
How art thou else rewarded with neglect,
Whilst many a paltry fellow in thy corps
Has been promoted ? it is ever thus.
Serv'd not Mardini in your company ?
He was, tho' honour'd with a valiant name,
To those who knew him well, a paltry soldier.

Geof. Your pardon, Sir, we did esteem him much,
Although inferiour to his gallant friend,

The brave Sebastian.

Fred.

The brave Sebastian !

He was, as I am told, a learned coxcomb,
And lov'd a goose-quill better than a sword.

What, dost thou call him brave ?

Thou, who dost bear about that war-worn trunk,
Like an old target, hack'd and rough with wounds,
Whilst, after all his mighty battles, he
Was with a smooth skin in his coffin laid,
Unblemish'd with a scar.

Geof. His duty call'd not to such desp'rate
service ;

For I have fought where few alive remain'd,
And none unscath'd ; where but a few remain'd,
Thus marr'd and mangled ; (*shewing his wounds.*)

As belike you've seen,

O' summer nights, around th' evening lamp,
Some wretched moths, wingless, and half-con-
sum'd,

Just feebly crawling o'er their heaps of dead. —
In Savoy, on a small, tho' desp'rate post,
Of full three hundred goodly chosen men,
But twelve were left, and right dear friends were we
For ever after. They are all dead now :

I'm old and lonely. — We were valiant hearts —
Fred'rick Dewalter would have stopp'd a breach
Against the devil himself. I'm lonely now !

Fred. I'm sorry for thee. Hang ungrateful
chiefs !

Why wert thou not promoted ?

Geof. After that battle, where my happy fate
Had led me to fulfil a glorious part,

Chaf'd with the gibing insults of a slave,
The worthless fav'rite of a great man's fav'rite,
I rashly did affront ; our cautious prince,
With narrow policy dependant made,
Dar'd not, as I am told, promote me then,
And now he is asham'd, or has forgot it.

Fred. Fye, fye upon it ! let him be asham'd !
Here is a trifle for thee — (*offering him money.*)

Geof. No, good sir,
I have enough to live as poor men do.
When I'm in want I'll thankfully receive,
Because I'm poor, but not because I'm brave.

Fred. You're proud, old soldier.

Geof. No, I am not proud ;
For if I were, methinks I'd be morose,
And willing to depreciate other men.

Enter ROSINBERG.

Ros. (*clapping Geof. on the shoulder.*) How
goes it with thee now, my good Field-
marshal ?

Geof. The better that I see your honour well,
And in the humour to be merry with me.

Ros. Faith, by my sword, I've rightly nam'd
thee too :

What is a good Field-marshal, but a man,
Whose gen'rous courage and undaunted mind,
Doth marshal others on in glory's way ?
Thou art not one by princely favour dubb'd,
But one of nature's making.

Geof. You shew, my lord, such pleasant
courtesy,
I know not how —

Ros. But see, the Gen'ral comes.

Enter BASIL.

Ros. (pointing to Geof.) Behold the worthy
vet'ran.

Bas. (taking him by the hand.) Brave honour-
able man, your worth I know,
And greet it with a brother-soldier's love.

Geof. (taking away his hand in confusion.) My
Gen'ral, this is too much, too much honour.

Bas. (taking his hand again.) No, valiant soldier,
I must have it so.

Geof. My humble state agrees not with such
honour.

Bas. Think not of it, thy state is not thyself.
Let mean souls, highly rank'd, look down on thee,
As the poor dwarf, perch'd on a pedestal,
O'erlooks the giant: 'tis not worth a thought.
Art thou not Geoffry of the tenth brigade,
Whose warlike feats child, maid, and matron know?
And oft, cross-elbow'd, o'er his nightly bowl,
The jolly toper to his comrade tells?
Whose glorious feats of war, by cottage door,
The ancient soldier, tracing in the sand
The many movements of the varied field,
In warlike terms to list'ning swains relates;
Whose bosoms glowing at the wond'rous tale,
First learn to scorn the hind's inglorious life?
Shame seize me, if I would not rather be
The man thou art, than court-created chief,
Known only by the dates of his promotion!

Geof. Ah! would I were, would I were young
again,
To fight beneath your standard, noble gen'ral!
Methinks what I have done were but a jest,
Ay, but a jest to what I now should do,
Were I again the man that I have been.
O! I could fight!

Bas. And wouldst thou fight for me?

Geof. Ay, to the death!

Bas. Then come, brave man, and be my
champion still:

The sight of thee will fire my soldiers' breasts.
Come, noble vet'ran, thou shalt fight for me.

[EXIT *with* Geoffry.]

Fred. What does he mean to do?

Ros. We'll know ere long.

Fred. Our gen'ral bears it with a careless face,
For one so wise.

Ros. A careless face! on what?

Fred. Now feign not ignorance, we know it all.
News which havespread in whispers from the court,
Since last night's messenger arriv'd from Milan.

Ros. As I'm an honest man, I know it not!

Fred. 'Tis said the rival armies are so near,
A battle must immediately ensue.

Ros. It cannot be. Our gen'ral knows it not.
The Duke is of our side a sworn ally,
And had such messenger to Mantua come,
He would have been appriz'd upon the instant.
It cannot be, it is some idle tale.

Fred. So may it prove till we have join'd them too,

Then heaven grant they may be nearer still !
 For O ! my soul for war and danger pants,
 As doth the noble lion for his prey.
 My soul delights in battle.

Ros. Upon my simple word, I'd rather see
 A score of friendly fellows shaking hands,
 Than all the world in arms. Hast thou no fear?

Fred. What dost thou mean ?

Ros. Hast thou no fear of death ?

Fred. Fear is a name for something in the mind,
 But what, from inward sense, I cannot tell.
 I could as little anxious march to battle,
 As when a boy to childish games I ran.

Ros. Then as much virtue hast thou in thy
 valour,
 As when a child thou hadst in childish play.
 The brave man is not he who feels no fear,
 For that were stupid and irrational;
 But he, whose noble soul its fear subdues,
 And bravely dares the danger nature shrinks from.
 As for your youth, whom blood and blows delight,
 Away with them ! there is not in the crew
 One valiant spirit. — Ha ! what sound is this ?

(shouting is heard without.)

Fred. The soldiers shout ; I'll run and learn
 the cause.

Ros. But tell me first, how did'st thou like the
 vet'ran ?

Fred. He is too proud ; he was displeas'd with me
 Because I offer'd him a little sum.

Ros. What money ! O ! most gen'rous noble spirit !

Noble rewarder of superiour worth !

A halfpenny for Bellisarius !

But hark ! they shout again — here comes Valtomer.

(Shouting heard without.)

Enter VALTOMER.

What does this shouting mean ?

Valt. O ! I have seen a sight, a glorious sight !
Thou would'st have smil'd to see it.

Ros. How smile ? methinks thine eyes are wet
with tears.

Valt. *(passing the back of his hands across his eyes.)*
'Faith so they are ; well, well, but I smil'd too.
You heard the shouting.

Ros. and Fred. Yes.

Valt. O had you seen it !
Drawn out in goodly ranks, there stood our troops ;
Here, in the graceful state of manly youth,
His dark face brighten'd with a gen'rous smile,
Which to his eyes such flashing lustre gave,
As tho' his soul, like an unsheathed sword,
Had thro' them gleam'd, our noble gen'ral stood ;
And to his soldiers, with heart-moving words,
The vet'ran shewing, his brave deeds rehears'd ;
Who by his side stood like a storm-scath'd oak,
Beneath the shelter of some noble tree,
In the green honours of its youthful prime.

Ros. How look'd the veteran ?

Valt. I cannot tell thee !
At first he bore it up with chearful looks,
As one who fain would wear his honours bravely,

And greet the soldiers with a comrade's face :
 But when Count Basil, in such moving speech,
 Told o'er his actions past, and bad his troops
 Great deeds to emulate, his count'nance chang'd;
 High-heav'd his manly breast, as it had been
 By inward strong emotion half convuls'd ;
 Trembled his nether lip; he shed some tears.
 The gen'ral paus'd, the soldiers shouted loud ;
 Then hastily he brush'd the drops away,
 And wav'd his hand, and clear'd his tear-chok'd
 voice,

As tho' he would some grateful answer make;
 When back with double force the whelming tide
 Of passion came; high o'er his hoary head
 His arm he toss'd, and heedless of respect,
 In Basil's bosom hid his aged face,
 Sobbing aloud. From the admiring ranks
 A cry arose; still louder shouts resound.
 I felt a sudden tightness grasp my throat
 As it would strangle me; such as I felt,
 I knew it well, some twenty years ago,
 When my good father shed his blessing on me :
 I hate to weep, and so I came away.

Ros. (giving Valt. his hand.) And there, take
 thou my blessing for the tale.

Hark! how they shout again! 'tis nearer now.
 This way they march.

[*Martial Musick heard. Enter Soldiers marching in order, bearing GEOFFRY in triumph on their shoulders. After them enter BASIL: the whole preceded by a band of musick. They cross over the stage, are joined by Ros. &c. and EXEUNT.*]

SCENE II.

Enter GAURIECIO and a GENTLEMAN, talking as they enter.

Gaur. So slight a tie as this we cannot trust,
One day her influence may detain him here,
But love a feeble agent may be found
With the ambitious.

Gent. And so you think this boyish odd conceit
Of bearing home in triumph with his troops
That aged soldier, will your purpose serve?

Gaur. Yes, I will make it serve; for tho' my
 prince
Is little scrupulous of right and wrong,
I have possess'd his mind, as tho' it were
A flagrant insult on his princely state
To honour thus the man he has neglected,
Which makes him relish, with a keener taste,
My purpos'd scheme. Come, let us fall to work.
With all their warm heroick feelings rous'd,
We'll spirit up his troops to mutiny,
Which must retard, perhaps undo him quite.
Thanks to his childish love, which has so well
Procur'd us time to tamper with the fools.

Gent. Ah! but those feelings he has wak'd
 within them,
Are gen'rous feelings, and endear himself.

Gaur. It matters not, tho' gen'rous in their
 nature,
They yet may serve a most ungen'rous end;

And he who teaches men to think, tho' nobly,
Doth raise within their minds a busy judge
To scan his actions. Send thine agents forth,
And sound it in their ears how much Count Basil
Affects all difficult and desp'rate service,
To raise his fortunes by some daring stroke ;
Having unto the Emperour pledg'd his word,
To make his troops all dreadful hazards brave :
For which intent he fills their simple minds
With idle tales of glory and renown ;
Using their warm attachment to himself
For most unworthy ends.

This is the busy time, go forth, my friend ;
Mix with the soldiers, now in jolly groups
Around their ev'ning cups. There, spare no cost.
(*gives him a purse.*)

Observe their words, see how the poison takes,
And then return again.

Gent.

I will, my lord.

[*EXEUNT severally.*]

SCENE III.

*A Suite of grand Apartments, with their wide doors
thrown open, lighted up with lamps, and filled
with company in masks. Enter several Masks,
and pass through the first apartment to the
other rooms. Then enter BASIL in the disguise
of a wounded soldier.*

Bas. (alone.) Now am I in the region of delight!
Within the blessed compass of these walls
She is ; the gay light of those blazing lamps

Doth shine upon her, and this painted floor
Is with her footsteps press'd. E'en now, perhaps,
Amidst that motley rout she plays her part :
There will I go ; she cannot be conceal'd ;
For but the flowing of her graceful robe
Will soon betray the lovely form that wears it,
Tho' in a thousand masks. Ye homely weeds, —
(*looking at his habit.*)

Which half conceal, and half declare my state,
Beneath your kind disguise, O ! let me prosper,
And boldly take the privilege ye give :
Follow her mazy steps, crowd by her side ;
Thus, near her face my list'ning ear incline,
And feel her soft breath fan my glowing cheek ;
Her fair hand seize, yea, press it closely too !
May it not be e'en so ? by heav'n it shall !
This once, O ! serve me well, and ever after
Ye shall be treasur'd like a monarch's robes ;
Lodg'd in my chamber, near my pillow kept ;
And oft with midnight lamp I'll visit ye,
And gazing wistfully, this night recall,
With all its past delights. — But yonder moves
A slender form, dress'd in an azure robe ;
It moves not like the rest — it must be she !

(*Goes hastily into another apartment, and mixes
with the Masks.*)

*Enter ROSINBERG, fantastically dressed, with a
willow upon his head, and scraps of sonnets and
torn letters fluttering round his neck, pursued
by a group of Masks from one of the inner*

apartments, who hoot at him, and push him about as he enters.

1st Mask. Away, thou art a saucy jeering knave,
And fain wouldst make a jest of all true love.

Ros. Nay, gentle ladies, do not buffet me :
I am a right true servant of the fair ;
And as this woeful chaplet on my brow,
And these tear-blotted sonnets would denote,
A poor abandon'd lover, out of place ;
With any lover ready to engage,
Who will enlist me in her loving service.
Of a convenient kind my talents are,
And to all various humours may be shap'd.

2d Mask. What canst thou do ?

3d Mask. Ay, what besides offending ?

Ros. O ! I can sigh so deeply, look so sad ;
Pule out a piteous tale on bended knee ;
Groan like a ghost ; so very wretched be,
As would delight a tender lady's heart
But to behold.

1st Mask. Poo, poo, insipid fool !

Ros. But should my lady brisker mettle own,
And tire of all those gentle dear delights,
Such pretty little quarrels I'd invent —
As whether such a fair-one (some dear friend)
Whose squirrel's tail was pinch'd, or the soft maid,
With fav'rite lap-dog of a surfeit sick,
Have greatest cause of delicate distress :
Or whether —

1st Mask. Go, thou art too bad indeed !
(*aside.*) How could he know I quarrell'd with
the Count ?

2d Mask. Wilt thou do nothing for thy lady's fame ?

Ros. Yes, lovely shepherdess, on ev'ry tree
I'll carve her name, with true-love garlands bound :
Write madrigals upon her roseate cheeks ;
Odes to her eye ; 'faith, ev'ry wart and mole
That spots her snowy skin, shall have its sonnet !
I'll make love-posies for her thimble's edge,
Rather than please her not.

3d Mask. But for her sake what dangers wilt thou brave ?

Ros. In truth, fair Nun, I stomach dangers less
Than other service, and were something loth
To storm a convent's walls for one dear glance ;
But if she'll wisely manage this alone,
As maids have done, come o'er the wall herself,
And meet me fairly on the open plain,
I will engage her tender steps to aid
In all annoyance of rude briar or stone,
Or crossing rill, some half-foot wide, or so,
Which that fair lady should unaided pass,
Ye gracious pow'rs, forbid ! I will defend
Against each hideous fly, whose dreadful buzz —

4th Mask. Such paltry service suits thee best indeed.

What maid of spirit would not spurn thee from her ?

Ros. Yes, to recall me soon, sublime Sultana !
For I can stand the burst of female passion,
Each change of humour and affected storm,
Be scolded, frown'd upon, to exile sent,

Recall'd, caress'd, chid, and disgrac'd again ;
And say what maid of spirit would forego
The bliss of one to exercise it thus !

O ! I can bear ill treatment like a lamb !

4th Mask. (*beating him.*) Well, bear it then,
thou hast deserv'd it well.

Ros. Zounds, lady ! do not give such heavy
blows ;

I'm not your husband, as belike you guess.

5th Mask. Come, lover, I enlist thee for my
swain ;

Therefore, good lady, do forbear your blows,
Nor thus assume my rights.

Ros. Agreed. Wilt thou a gracious mistress
prove ?

5th Mask. Such as thou wouldst, such as thy
genius suits ;

For since of universal scope it is,
All women's humour shalt thou find in me.
I'll gently soothe thee with such winning smiles—
To nothing sink thee with a scornful frown :
Teaze thee with peevish and affected freaks ;
Caress thee, love thee, hate thee, break thy pate ;
But still between the whiles I'll careful be,
In feigned admiration of thy parts,
Thy shape, thy manners, or thy graceful mien,
To bind thy giddy soul with flatt'ry's charm ;
For well thou know'st that flatt'ry ever is
The tickling spice, the pungent seasoning
Which makes this motley dish of monstrous scraps
So pleasing to the dainty lover's taste.

Thou canst not leave, tho' violent in extreme,
And most vexatious in her teasing moods,
Thou canst not leave the fond admiring soul,
Who did declare, when calmer reason rul'd,
Thou hadst a pretty leg.

Ros. Marry, thou hast the better of me there.

5th Mask. And more ; I'll pledge to thee my
honest word,

That when your noble swainship shall bestow
More faithful homage on the simple maid,
Who loves you with sincerity and truth,
Than on the changeful and capricious tyrant,
Who mocking leads you like a trammell'd ass,
My studied woman's wiles I'll lay aside,
And such a one become.

Ros. Well spoke, brave lady, I will follow thee.

(follows her to the corner of the stage.)

Now on my life these ears of mine I'd give,
To have but one look of that little face,
Where such a biting tongue doth hold its court
To keep the fools in awe. Nay, nay, unmask :
I'm sure thou hast a pair of wicked eyes,
A short and saucy nose : now pri'thee do.

(unmasking.)

Alb. (unmasking.) Well, hast thou guess'd me
right ?

Ros. (bowing low.) Wild freedom, chang'd to
most profound respect,
Doth make an awkward booby of me now.

Alb. I've join'd your frolic with a good intent,
For much I wish'd to gain your private ear.

The time is precious, and I must be short.

Ros. On me your slightest word more pow'r
will have,

Most honour'd lady, than a conn'd oration.

Thou art the only one of all thy sex,

Who wearst thy years with such a winning grace,

Thou art the more admir'd the more thou fad'st.

Alb. I thank your lordship for these courteous
words ;

But to my purpose—You are Basil's friend :

Be friendly to him then, and warn him well

This court to leave, nor be allur'd to stay ;

For if he does, there's mischief waits him here

May prove the bane of all his future days.

Remember this, I must no longer stay.

God bless your friend and you : I love you both.

[EXIT.

Ros. (alone.) What may this warning mean ?

I had my fears.

There's something hatching which I know not of.

I've lost all spirit for this masking now.

(throwing away his papers and his willows.)

Away ye scraps! I have no need of you.

I would I knew what garment Basil wears :

I watch'd him, yet he did escape my sight ;

But I must search again and find him out. [EXIT.

*Enter BASIL much agitated, with his mask in his
hand.*

Bas. In vain I've sought her, follow'd ev'ry
form

Where aught appear'd of dignity or grace :
I've listen'd to the tone of ev'ry voice ;
I've watch'd the entrance of each female mask,
My flutt'ring heart rous'd like a startled hare,
With the imagined rustling of her robes,
At ev'ry dame's approach. Deceitful night,
How art thou spent ! where are thy promis'd joys ?
How much of thee is gone ? O spiteful fate !
And yet within the compass of these walls
Somewhere she is, altho' to me she is not.
Some other eye doth gaze upon her form,
Some other ear doth listen to her voice ;
Some happy fav'rite doth enjoy the bliss
My spiteful stars deny.
Disturber of my soul ! what veil conceals thee ?
What dev'lish spell is o'er this cursed hour ?
O ! heav'ns and earth where art thou !

Enter a Mask in the dress of a female conjurer.

Mask. Methinks thou art impatient, valiant
soldier :

Thy wound doth gall thee sorely ; is it so ?

Bas. Away, away ! I cannot fool with thee.

Mask. I have some potent drugs may ease
thy smart.

Where is thy wound ? is't here ?

(pointing to the bandage on his arm.)

Bas. Poo, Poo, begone !

Thou canst do nought — 'tis in my head, my
heart —

'Tis ev'ry where, where med'cine cannot cure.

Mask. If wounded in the heart, it is a wound
Which some ungrateful fair-one hath inflicted,
And I may conjure something for thy good.

Bas. Ah ! if thou could'st ! what, must I fool
with thee ?

Mask. Thou must awhile, and be examin'd too.
What kind of woman did the wicked deed ?

Bas. I cannot tell thee. In her presence still
My mind in such a wild delight hath been,
I could not pause to picture out her beauty,
Yet nought of woman e'er was form'd so fair.

Mask. Art thou a soldier, and no weapon
bear'st
To send her wound for wound ?

Bas. Alas ! she shoots from such a hopeless
height,
No dart of mine hath plume to mount so far ;
None but a prince may dare.

Mask. But if thou hast no hope, thou hast no
love.

Bas. I love, and yet in truth I had no hope,
But that she might at least with some good will,
Some gentle pure regard, some secret kindness,
Within her dear remembrance give me place.
This was my all of hope, but it is flown :
For she regards me not : despises, scorns me :
Scorns, I must say it too, a noble heart,
That would have bled for her.

(*Mask, discovering herself to be Victoria, by speak-
ing in her true voice.*) O ! no, she does not.

[EXIT *hastily in confusion.*

*Bas. (stands for a moment rivetted to the spot,
then holds up both his hands in an ecstasy.)*

It is herself! it is her blessed self!

O! what a fool am I, that had no power
To follow her, and urge th' advantage on.
Begone, unmanly fears! I must be bold.

[EXIT *after her.*

A Dance of Masks.

Enter DUKE and GAURIECIO, unmasked.

Duke. This revelry, methinks, goes gaily on.
The hour is late, and yet your friend returns not.

Gaur. He will return ere long — nay, there he
comes.

Enter GENTLEMAN.

Duke. Does all go well? (*going close up to him.*)

Gent. All as your grace could wish.

For now the poison works, and the stung soldiers
Rage o'er their cups, and, with fire-kindled eyes,
Swear vengeance on the chief who would betray
them.

That Frederick too, the discontented man
Of whom your highness was so lately told,
Swallows the bait, and does his part most bravely.
Gauriecio counsel'd well to keep him blind,
Nor with a bribe attempt him. On my soul!
He is so fiery he had spurn'd us else,
And ruin'd all the plot.

Duke. Speak softly, friend — I'll hear it all in
private.

A gay and careless face we now assume.

DUKE, GAUR. and GENT. retire into the inner apartment, appearing to laugh and talk gaily to the different Masks as they pass them.

Re-enter VICTORIA followed by BASIL.

Vict. Forbear, my Lord, these words offend mine ear.

Bas. Yet let me but this once, this once offend,
Nor thus with thy displeasure punish me ;
And if my words against all prudence sin,
O ! hear them, as the good of heart do list
To the wild ravings of a soul distraught.

Vict. If I indeed should listen to thy words,
They must not talk of love.

Bas. To be with thee, to speak, to hear thee
speak,
To claim the soft attention of thine eye,
I'd be content to talk of any thing,
If it were possible to be with thee,
And think of ought but love.

Vict. I fear, my lord, you have too much pre-
sum'd
On those unguarded words, which were in truth
Utter'd at unawares, with little heed,
And urge their meaning far beyond the right.

Bas. I thought, indeed, that they were kindly
meant,
As tho' thy gentle breast did kindly feel
Some secret pity for my hopeless pain,
And would not pierce with scorn, ungen'rousscorn,
A heart so deeply stricken.

Vict. So far thou'st read it well.

Bas. Ha! have I well?
Thou dost not hate me then?

Vict. My father comes;
He were displeas'd if he should see thee thus.

Bas. Thou dost not hate me then?

Vict. Away! he'll be displeas'd—I cannot say—

Bas. Well, let him come: it is thyself I fear;
For did destruction thunder o'er my head,
By the dread pow'r of heav'n I would not stir
Till thou hadst answer'd my impatient soul!
Thou dost not hate me?

Vict. Nay, nay, let go thy hold—I cannot hate
thee. *(breaks from him and exit.)*

Bas. (alone.) Thou canst not hate me! no,
thou canst not hate me!
For I love thee so well, so passing well,
With such o'erflowing heart, so very dearly,
That it were sinful not to pay me back
Some small, some kind return.

Enter MIRANDO, dressed like Cupid.

Mir. Bless thee, brave soldier.

Bas. What say'st thou, pretty child! what
playful fair
Has deck'd thee out in this fantastick guise?

Mir. It was Victoria's self; it was the princess.

Bas. Thou art her fav'rite then?

Mir. They say I am:
And now, between ourselves, I'll tell thee, soldier,
I think in very truth she loves me well.

Such merry little songs she teaches me —
Sly riddles too, and when I'm laid to rest,
Oft times on tip-toe near my couch she steals,
And lifts the cov'ring so, to look upon me.
And oftentimes I feign as tho' I slept ;
For then her warm lips to my cheeks she lays,
And pats me softly with her fair white hands ;
And then I laugh, and thro' mine eye-lids peep,
And then she tickles me, and calls me cheat ;
And then we do so laugh, ha, ha, ha, ha !

Bas. What does she even so, thou happiest
child ?

And have those rosy cheeks been press'd so
dearly ?

Delicious urchin ! I will kiss thee too.

*(takes him eagerly up in his arms, and
kisses him.)*

Mir. No, let me down, thy kisses are so rough,
So furious rough — she doth not kiss me so.

Bas. Sweet boy, where is thy chamber ? by
Victoria's ?

Mir. Hard by her own.

Bas. Then will I come beneath thy window
soon ;

And, if I could, some pretty song I'd sing,
To lull thee to thy rest.

Mir. O no, thou must not ! 'tis a frightful
place :

It is the church-yard of the neighb'ring dome.
The princess loves it for the lofty trees,

Whose spreading branches shade her chamber
walls :

So do not I ; for, when 'tis dark o' nights,
Goblins howl there, and ghosts rise thro' the
ground.

I hear them many a time when I'm a bed,
And hide beneath the cloaths my cow'ring head.
O ! is it not a frightful thing, my lord,
To sleep alone i' the dark ?

Bas. Poor harmless child ! thy prate is wonderous sweet.

Enter a group of Masks.

1st Mask. What dost thou here, thou little
truant boy ?

Come play thy part with us.

*Masks place MIRANDO in the middle, and range
themselves round him.*

SONG. — A GLEE.

Child, with many a childish wile,
Timid look, and blushing smile,
Downy wings to steal thy way,
Gilded bow, and quiver gay,
Who in thy simple mien would trace
The tyrant of the human race ?

Who is he whose flinty heart
Hath not felt the flying dart ?
Who is he that from the wound
Hath not pain and pleasure found ?
Who is he that hath not shed
Curse and blessing on thy head ?

Ah Love ! our weal, our woe, our bliss, our bane,
A restless life have they who wear thy chain !
Ah Love ! our weal, our woe, our bliss, our bane,
More hapless still are they who never felt thy pain !

All the Masks dance round Cupid. Then enter a band of satyrs, who frighten away Love and his votaries ; and conclude the scene, dancing in a grotesque manner.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Street before BASIL'S Lodging.*

Enter ROSINBERG and two Officers.

Ros. (speaking as he enters.) Unless we find him quickly, all is lost.

1st Off. His very guards, methinks, have left their post

To join the mutiny.

Ros. (knocking very loud.) Holla ! who's there within ? confound this door !

It will not ope. O for a giant's strength !

Holla, holla, within ! will no one hear ?

Enter a Porter from the house.

Ros. (eagerly to the Porter.) Is he return'd ?
is he return'd ? not yet !

Thy face doth tell me so.

Port. Not yet, my Lord.

Ros. Then let him ne'er return ! —

Tumult, disgrace, and ruin have their way !
I'll search for him no more.

Port. He hath been absent all the night, my lord.

Ros. I know he hath.

2nd Off. And yet 'tis possible
He may have enter'd by the secret door ;
And now, perhaps, in deepest sleep entranc'd
Is dead to ev'ry sound.

(*Ros. without speaking, rushes into the house, and the rest follow him.*)

Enter BASIL.

Bas. The blue air of the morning pinches
keenly.
Beneath her window all the chilly night,
I felt it not. Ah ! night has been my day ;
And the pale lamp which from her chamber
gleam'd,
Has to the breeze a warmer temper lent
Than the red burning east.

Re-enter ROSINBERG, &c. from the house.

Ros. Himself ! himself ! he's here ! he's here !
O Basil !

What fiend at such a time could lead thee forth ?

Bas. What is the matter which disturbs you
thus ?

Ros. Matter that would a wiser man disturb.
Treason's abroad : thy men have mutinied.

Bas. It is not so ; thy wits have mutinied,
And left their sober station in thy brain.

1st Off. Indeed, my Lord, he speaks in sober earnest.

Some secret enemies have been employ'd
To fill your troops with strange imaginations :
As tho' their gen'ral would, for selfish gain,
Their gen'rous valour urge to des'prate deeds.
All to a man, assembled on the ramparts,
Now threaten vengeance, and refuse to march.

Bas. What ! think they vilely of me ? threaten too !

O ! most ungen'rous, most unmanly thought !
Didst thou attempt (*to Ros.*) to reason with their folly ?

Folly it is ; baseness it cannot be.

Ros. Yes, truly, I did reason with a storm,
And bid it cease to rage. —
Their eyes look fire on him who questions them :
The hollow murmurs of their mutter'd wrath
Sound dreadful thro' the dark extended ranks,
Like subterraneous grumblings of an earthquake.

————— The vengeful hurricane
Does not with such fantastick writhings toss
The woods' green boughs, as does convulsive
rage

Their forms with frantick gestures agitate.
Around the chief of hell such legions throng'd,
To bring back curse and discord on creation.

Bas. Nay they are men, altho' impassion'd ones.

I'll go to them —

Ros. And we will stand by thee.

My sword is thine against ten thousand strong,
If it should come to this.

Bas.

No, never, never!

There is no mean : I with my soldiers must
Or their commander or their victim prove.
But are my officers all staunch and faithful?

Ros. All but that devil, Fred'rick ——

He, disappointed, left his former corps,
Where he, in truth, had been too long neglected,
Thinking he should all on the sudden rise,
Brom Basil's well-known love of valiant men ;
And now, because it still must be deferr'd,
He thinks you seek from envy to depress him,
And burns to be reveng'd.

Bas. Well, well —— This grieves me too ——

But let us go.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

The ramparts of the Town. The Soldiers are discovered, drawn up in a disorderly manner, hollaing and speaking big, and clashing their arms tumultuously.

1st Sol. No, comrade, no, hell gape and swallow
me,

If I do budge for such most dev'lish orders !

2d Sol. Huzza ! brave comrades ! Who says
otherwise ?

3d Sol. Noone, huzza ! confound all treach'rous
leaders !

(The soldiers huzza and clash their arms.)

5th Sol. Heav'n dart its fiery light'ning on his head !

We're men, we are not cattle to be slaughter'd !

2d Sol. They who do long to caper high in air,
Into a thousand bloody fragments blown,
May follow our brave gen'ral.

1st Sol. Curse his name !
I've fought for him till my strain'd nerves have
crack'd !

2d Sol. We will command ourselves: for Milan,
comrades.

5th Sol. Ay, ay, for Milan, valiant hearts,
huzza !

*(All the Soldiers cast up their caps
in the air, and huzza.)*

2d Sol. Yes, comrades, tempting booty waits
us there,

And easy service: keep good hearts, my soldiers!
The gen'ral comes, good hearts! no flinching,
boys!

Look bold and fiercely: we're the masters now.

*(They all clash their arms and put on a fierce
threatening aspect to receive their General, who
now enters, followed by Rosinberg and Officers.
Basil walks close along the front ranks of the
Soldiers, looking at them very steadfastly; then
retires a few paces back, and raising his arm,
speaks with a very full loud voice.)*

Bas. How is it, soldiers, that I see you thus,
Assembled here, unsummon'd by command?

(A confused murmur is heard amongst the Soldiers ; some of them call out)

But we command ourselves ; we wait no orders.

(A confused noise of voices is heard, and one louder than the rest calls out)

Must we be butcher'd, for that we are brave !

(A loud clamour and clashing of arms, then several voices call out)

Damn hidden treach'ry ! we defy thy orders.

Fred'rick shall lead us now —————

(Other voices call out)

We'll march where'er we list, for Milan march.

Bas. (waving his hand, and beckoning them to be silent, speaks with a very loud voice.)

Yes, march where'er ye list : for Milan march.

Sol. Hear him, hear him !

(The murmur ceases — a short pause.)

Bas. Yes, march where'er ye list : for Milan march :

But as banditti, not as soldiers go ;

For on this spot of earth I will disband,

And take from you the rank and name of soldiers.

(A great clamour amongst the ranks — some call out)

What wear we arms for ?

(Others call out)

No, he dares not do it.

(One voice very loud)

Disband us at thy peril, treach'rous Basil !

(Several of the soldiers brandish their arms, and

threaten to attack him ; the officers gather round Basil, and draw their swords to defend him.)

Bas. Put up your swords, my friends, it must not be.

I thank your zeal, I'll deal with them alone.

Ros. What, shall we calmly stand and see thee butcher'd ?

Bas. (very earnestly.) Put up, my friends, (*Officers still persist.*) What! are you rebels too?

Will no one here his gen'ral's voice obey ?

I do command you to put up your swords.

Retire, and at a distance wait th' event.

Obey, or henceforth be no friends of mine.

(Officers retire, very unwillingly. Basil waives them off with his hand till they are all gone, then walks up to the front of his soldiers, who still hold themselves in a threatening posture.)

Soldiers ! we've fought together in the field,

And bravely fought: i' the face of horrid death,

At honour's call, I've led you dauntless on ;

Nor do I know the man of all your bands,

That ever poorly from the trial shrunk,

Or yielded to the foe contended space.

Am I the meanest then of all my troops,

That thus ye think, with base unmanly threats,

To move me now ? Put up those paltry weapons ;

They edgeless are to him who fears them not :

Rocks have been shaken from the solid base ;

But what shall move a firm and dauntless mind ?

Put up your swords, or dare the threaten'd deed —

Obey, or murder me. —

(*A confused murmur—some of the soldiers call out*)

March us to Milan, and we will obey thee.

(*Others call out*)

Ay, march us there, and be our leader still.

Bas. Nay, if I am your leader, I'll command
ye ;

And where I do command, there shall you go,

But not to Milan. No, nor shall you deviate

E'en half a furlong from your destin'd way,

To seize the golden booty of the east.

Think not to gain, or temporise with me ;

For should I this day's mutiny survive,

Much as I've lov'd you, soldiers, ye shall find me

Still more relentless in pursuit of vengeance ;

Tremendous, cruel, military vengeance.

There is no mean — a desp'rate game ye play ;

Therefore, I say, obey, or murder me.

Do as ye will, but do it manfully.

He is a coward who doth threaten me :

The man who slays me, but an angry soldier ;

Acting in passion, like the frantic son,

Who struck his sire and wept.

(*Soldiers call out*) It was thyself who sought to
murder us.

1st Sol. You have unto the Emp'rour pledg'd
your faith,

To lead us foremost in all desp'rate service :

You have agreed to sell your soldiers' blood,

And we have shed our dearest blood for you.

Bas. Hear me, my soldiers —

2d Sol. No, hear him not, he means to cozen you.

Fred'rick will do you right ———

(Endeavouring to stir up a noise and confusion amongst them.)

Bas. What cursed fiend art thou, cast out from hell

To spirit up rebellion ? damned villain !

(Seizes upon 2d soldier, drags him out from the ranks, and wrests his arms from him ; then takes a pistol from his side, and holds it to his head.)

Stand there, damn'd meddling villain, and be silent ;

For if thou utt'rest but a single word,

A cough or hem, to cross me in my speech,

I'll send thy cursed spirit from the earth,

To bellow with the damn'd !

(The soldiers keep a dead silence — after a pause, Basil resumes his speech.)

Listen to me, my soldiers.——

You say that I am to the Emp'rour pledg'd

To lead you foremost in all desp'rate service,

For now you call it not the path of glory ;

And if in this I have offended you,

I do indeed repent me of the crime.

But new from battles, where my native troops

So bravely fought, I felt me proud at heart,

And boasted of you, boasted foolishly.

I said, fair glory's palm ye would not yield

To e'er the bravest legion train'd to arms.

I swore the meanest man of all my troops

Would never shrink before an armed host,
If honour bade him stand. My royal master
Smil'd at the ardour of my heedless words,
And promis'd when occasion claim'd our arms,
To put them to the proof.
But ye do peace, and ease, and booty love,
Safe and ignoble service — be it so —
Forgive me that I did mistake you thus,
But do not earn with savage mutiny,
Your own destruction. We'll for Pavia march,
To join the royal army near its walls;
And there with blushing forehead will I plead,
That ye are men with warlike service worn,
Requiring ease and rest. Some other chief,
Whose cold blood boils not at the trumpet's sound,
Will in your rearward station head you then,
And so, my friends, we'll part. As for myself,
A volunteer, unheeded in the ranks,
I'll rather fight, with brave men for my fellows,
Than be the leader of a sordid band.

*(A great murmur rises amongst the ranks,
soldiers call out)*

We will not part! no, no, we will not part!

(All call out together)

We will not part! be thou our gen'ral still.

Bas. How can I be your gen'ral? ye obey
As caprice moves you; I must be obey'd
As honest men against themselves perform
A sacred oath. —

Some other chief will more indulgent prove —
You're weary grown—I've been too hard a master.

Soldiers. Thyself, and only thee, will we obey.

Bas. But if you follow me, yourselves ye pledge
Unto no easy service : — hardships, toils,
The hottest dangers of most dreadful fight
Will be your portion ; and when all is o'er,
Each, like his gen'ral, must contented be
Home to return again, a poor brave soldier.
How say ye now ? I spread no tempting lure —
A better fate than this, I promise none.

Soldiers. We'll follow Basil.

Bas. What token of obedience will ye give ?
(*A deep pause.*)

Soldiers, lay down your arms !

(*They all lay down their arms.*)

If any here are weary of the service,
Now let them quit the ranks, and they shall have
A free discharge, and passport to their homes ;
And from my scanty fortune I'll make good
The well-earn'd pay their royal master owes them.
Let those who follow me their arms resume,

(*they all resume their arms.*)

(*Basil, holding up his hands.*) High heaven be
prais'd !

I had been griev'd to part with you, my soldiers.
Here is a letter from my gracious master,
With offers of preferment in the north,
Most high preferment, which I did refuse,
For that I would not leave my gallant troops.

(*Takes out a letter, and throws it amongst
them.*)

*(A great commotion amongst the soldiers ;
many of them quit their ranks, and
crowd about him, calling out)*

Our gallant gen'ral !

(Others call out)

We'll spend our hearts' blood for thee, noble Basil !

Bas. And so you thought me false ? this bites
to the quick !

My soldiers thought me false !

*(They all quit their ranks, and crowd
eagerly around him. Basil, waving
them off with his hands.)*

Away, away, you have disgusted me !

(Soldiers retire to their ranks.)

'Tis well — retire, and hold yourselves prepar'd
To march upon command ; nor meet again
Till you are summon'd by the beat of drum.
Some secret enemy has tamper'd with you,
For yet I will not think that in these ranks
There moves a man who wears a traitor's heart.

*(The soldiers begin to march off, and musick
strikes up.)*

Bas. *(holding up his hand.)* Cease, cease, tri-
umphant sounds,

Which our brave fathers, men without reproach,
Rais'd in the hour of triumph ! but this hour
To us no glory brings —

Then silent be your march — ere that again
Our steps to glorious strains like these shall move,
A day of battle o'er our heads must pass,

And blood be shed to wash out this day's stain.

[*EXEUNT soldiers, silent and dejected.*

Enter FREDERICK, who starts back on seeing BASIL alone.

Bas. Advance, lieutenant ; wherefore shrink
ye back ?

I've ever seen you bear your head erect,
And front your man, though arm'd with frown-
ing death.

Have you done aught the valiant should not do ?
I fear you have. (*Fred. looks confused.*)

With secret art, and false insinuation,
The simple untaught soldiers to seduce
From their sworn duty, might become the base,
Become the coward well ; but O ! what villain
Had the dark pow'r t' engage thy valiant worth
In such a work as this !

Fred. Is Basil, then, so lavish of his praise
On a neglected pitiful subaltern ?
It were a libel on his royal master ;
A foul reproach upon fair fortune cast,
To call me valiant :
And surely he has been too much their debtor
To mean them this rebuke.

Bas. Is nature then so sparing of her gifts,
That it is wonderful when they are found
Where fortune smiles not ?
Thou art by nature brave, and so am I ;
But in those distant ranks moves there not one
(*Pointing off the stage.*)

Of high ennobled soul, by nature form'd
A hero and commander, who will yet
In his untrophied grave forgotten lie
With meaner men ? I dare be sworn there does.

Fred. What need of words ? I crave of thee
no favour.

I have offended 'gainst arm'd law, offended,
And shrink not from my doom.

Bas. I know thee well, I know thou fear'st
not death ;

On scaffold or in field with dauntless breast
Thou wilt engage him ; and, if thy proud soul,
In sullen obstinacy, scorns all grace,
E'en be it so. But if with manly gratitude
Thou truly canst receive a brave man's pardon,
Thou hast it freely.

Fred. It must not be. I've been thine enemy —
I've been unjust to thee —

Bas. I know thou hast ;
But thou art brave, and I forgive thee all.

Fred. My lord ! my gen'ral ! Oh, I cannot
speak !

I cannot live and be the wretch I am !

Bas. But thou canst live and be an honest man
From error turn'd, — canst live and be my friend.

(*Raising Fred. from the ground.*)

Forbear, forbear ! see where our friends advance :
They must not think thee suing for a pardon ;
That would disgrace us both. Yet, ere they come,
Tell me, if that thou mayst with honour tell,
What did seduce thee from thy loyal faith ?

Fred. No cunning traitor did my faith attempt,
For then I had withstood him : but of late,
I know not how — a bad and restless spirit
Has work'd within my breast, and made me
wretched.

I've lent mine ear to foolish idle tales,
Of very zealous, tho' but recent friends.

Bas. Softly, our friends approach — of this
again. [EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

*An Apartment in BASIL's Lodgings. Enter BASIL
and ROSINBERG.*

Ros. Thank heaven I am now alone with thee.
Last night I sought thee with an anxious mind,
And curs'd thine ill-tim'd absence. —
There's treason in this most deceitful court,
Against thee plotting, and this morning's tumult
Hath been its damn'd effect.

Bas. Nay, nay, my friend !
The nature of man's mind too well thou know'st,
To judge as vulgar hoodwink'd statesmen do ;
Who, ever with their own poor wiles misled,
Believe each popular tumult or commotion
Must be the work of deep-laid policy.
Poor, mean, mechanick souls, who little know
A few short words of energetick force,
Some powerful passion on the sudden rous'd,
The animating sight of something noble,
Some fond trait of the mem'ry finely wak'd,

A sound, a simple song without design,
In revolutions, tumults, wars, rebellions,
All grand events, have oft effected more
Than deepest cunning of their paltry art.
Some drunken soldier, eloquent with wine,
Who loves not fighting, hath harangued his mates,
For they in truth some hardships have endur'd :
Wherefore in this should we suspect the court ?

Ros. Ah ! there is something, friend, in Mantua's court,
Will make the blackest trait of barefac'd treason
Seem fair and guiltless to thy partial eye.

Bas. Nay, 'tis a weakness in thee, Rosinberg,
Which makes thy mind so jealous and distrustful.
Why should the duke be false ?

Ros. Because he is a double, crafty prince —
Because I've heard it rumour'd secretly,
That he in some dark treaty is engag'd,
Ev'n with our master's enemy the Frank.

Bas. And so thou think'st —

Ros. Nay, hear me to the end.
Last night that good and honourable dame,
Noble Albini, with most friendly art,
From the gay clam'rous throng my steps beguil'd,
Unmask'd before me, and with earnest grace
Entreated me, if I were Basil's friend,
To tell him hidden danger waits him here,
And warn him earnestly this court to leave.
She said she lov'd thee much ; and hadst thou seen
How anxiously she urg'd —

Bas. (*interrupting him.*) By heav'n and earth,

There is a ray of light breaks thro' thy tale,
 And I could leap like madmen in their freaks,
 So blessed is the gleam! Ah! no, no, no!
 It cannot be! alas, it cannot be!
 Yet didst thou say she urg'd it earnestly?
 She is a woman, who avoids all share
 In secret politicks; one only charge
 Her int'rest claims, Victoria's guardian friend —
 And she would have me hence — it must be so.
 O! would it were! how saidst thou, gentle Ro-
 sinberg?

She urg'd it earnestly — how did she urge it?
 Nay, pri'thee do not stare upon me thus,
 But tell me all her words. What said she else?

Ros. O Basil! I could laugh to see thy folly,
 But that thy weakness doth provoke me so.
 Most admirable, brave, determin'd man!
 So well, so lately tried, what art thou now?
 A vain deceitful thought transports thee thus.
 Thinkst thou —

Bas. I will not tell thee what I think.

Ros. But I can guess it well, and it deceives
 thee.

Leave this detested place, this fatal court,
 Where dark deceitful cunning plots thy ruin.
 A soldier's duty calls thee loudly hence.
 The time is critical. How wilt thou feel
 When they shall tell these tidings in thine ear,
 That brave Piscaro, and his royal troops,
 Our valiant fellows, have the en'my fought,
 Whilst we, so near at hand, lay loit'ring here?

Bas. Thou dost disturb thy brain with fancied fears.

Our fortunes rest not on a point so nice,
That one short day should be of all this moment ;
And yet this one short day will be to me
Worth years of other time.

Ros. Nay, rather say,
A day to darken all thy days beside.
Confound the fatal beauty of that woman,
Which hath bewitch'd thee so !

Bas. 'Tis most ungen'rous
To push me thus with rough unsparing hand,
Where but the slightest touch is felt so dearly.
It is unfriendly.

Ros. God knows my heart ! I would not give
thee pain ;
But it disturbs me, Basil, vexes me,
To see thee so enthralled by a woman.
If she is fair, others are fair as she.
Some other face will like emotions raise,
When thou canst better play a lover's part :
But for the present, — fye upon it, Basil !

Bas. What, is it possible thou hast beheld,
Hast tarried by her too, her converse shar'd,
Yet talk'st as tho' she were a common fair one,
Such as a man may fancy and forget ?
'Thou art not, sure, so dull and brutish grown :
It is not so ; thou dost belie thy thoughts,
And vainly try'st to gain me with the cheat.

Ros. So thinks each lover of the maid he loves,
Yet, in their lives, some many maidens love.

Fye on it ! leave this town, and be a soldier !

Bas. Have done, have done ! why dost thou
bate me thus ?

Thy words become disgusting to me, Rosinberg.
What claim hast thou my actions to controul ?
I'll Mantua leave when it is fit I should.

Ros. Then, 'faith ! 'tis fitting thou shouldst
leave it now ;

Ay, on the instant. Is't not desperation
To stay, and hazard ruin on thy fame,
Tho' yet uncheer'd e'en by that tempting lure,
No lover breathes without ? thou hast no hope.

Bas. What, dost thou mean — curse on the
paltry thought !

That I should count and bargain with my heart,
Upon the chances of unstinted favour,
As little souls their base-bred fancies feed ?
O ! were I conscious that within her breast
I held some portion of her dear regard,
Tho' pent for life within a prison's walls,
Where thro' my grate I yet might sometimes see
E'en but her shadow sporting in the sun ;
Tho' plac'd by fate wheresome obstructing bound,
Some deep impassable between us roll'd,
And I might yet from some high tow'ring cliff
Perceive her distant mansion from afar,
Or mark its blue smoke rising eve and morn ;
Nay, tho' within the circle of the moon
Some spell did fix her, never to return,
And I might wander in the hours of night,
And upward turn my ever-gazing eye,

Fondly to mark upon its varied disk
Some little spot that might her dwelling be ;
My fond, my fixed heart would still adore,
And own no other love. Away, away !
How canst thou say to one who loves like me,
Thou hast no hope ?

Ros. But with such hope, my friend, how
stand thy fears ?

Are they so well refin'd ? how wilt thou bear
Ere long to hear, that some high-favour'd prince
Has won her heart, her hand, has married her ?
Tho' now unshackled, will it always be ?

Bas. By heav'n thou dost contrive but to torment,

And hast a pleasure in the pain thou giv'st !
There is malignity in what thou say'st.

Ros. No, not malignity, but kindness, Basil,
That fain would save thee from the yawning gulf,
To which blind passion guides thy heedless steps.

Bas. Go, rather save thyself
From the weak passion which has seiz'd thy breast,
T' assume authority with sage-like brow,
And shape my actions by thine own caprice.
I can direct myself.

Ros. Yes, do thyself,
And let no artful woman do it for thee.

Bas. I scorn thy thought : it is beneath my
scorn :

It is of meanness sprung — an artful woman !
O ! she has all the loveliness of heav'n,
And all its goodness too !

Ros. I mean not to impute dishonest arts,
I mean not to impute —

Bas. No, 'faith, thou canst not.

Ros. What, can I not? their arts all women have.
But now of this no more; it moves thee greatly.
Yet once again, as a most loving friend,
Let me conjure thee, if thou prizest honour,
A soldier's fair repute, a hero's fame,
What noble spirits love, and well I know
Full dearly dost thou prize them, leave this place,
And give thy soldiers orders for the march.

Bas. Nay, since thou must assume it o'er me
thus,

Be gen'ral, and command my soldiers too.

Ros. What, hath this passion in so short a space,
O! curses on it! so far chang'd thee, Basil,
That thou dost take with such ungentle warmth,
The kindly freedom of thine ancient friend?
Methinks the beauty of a thousand maids
Would not have mov'd me thus to treat my friend,
My best, mine earliest friend!

Bas. Say kinsman rather; chance has link'd us so:
Our blood is near, our hearts are sever'd far;
No act of choice did e'er unite our souls.
Men most unlike we are; our thoughts unlike;
My breast disowns thee — thou'rt no friend of mine.

Ros. Ah! have I then so long, so dearly lov'd
thee;

So often, with an elder brother's care,
Thy childish rambles tended, shar'd thy sports;
Fill'd up by stealth thy weary school-boy's task;

Taught thy young arms thine earliest feats of
 strength;
 With boastful pride thine early rise beheld
 In glory's paths, contented then to fill
 A second place, so I might serve with thee;
 And say'st thou now, I am no friend of thine?
 Well, be it so; I am thy kinsman then,
 And by that title will I save thy name
 From danger of disgrace. Indulge thy will.
 I'll lay me down and feign that I am sick:
 And yet I shall not feign — I shall not feign;
 For thy unkindness makes me so indeed.
 It will be said that Basil tarried here
 To save his friend, for so they'll call me still;
 Nor will dishonour fall upon thy name
 For such a kindly deed. —

*(Basil walks up and down in great agitation,
 then stops, covers his face with his hands,
 and seems to be overcome. Rosinberg
 looks at him earnestly.)*

O blessed heav'n, he weeps!

(Runs up to him, and catches him in his arms.)

O Basil! I have been too hard upon thee.

And is it possible I've mov'd thee thus?

Bas. (in a convulsed broken voice.) I will re-
 nounce — I'll leave —

Ros. What says my Basil?

Bas. I'll Mantua leave — I'll leave this seat
 of bliss —

This lovely woman — tear my heart in twain —

Cast off at once my little span of joy —
Be wretched — miserable — whate'er thou wilt —
Dost thou forgive me ?

Ros. O my friend ! my friend !
I love thee now more than I ever lov'd thee.
I must be cruel to thee to be kind :
Each pang I see thee feel strikes thro' my heart ;
Then spare us both, call up thy noble spirit,
And meet the blow at once. Thy troops are
ready —

Let us depart, nor loose another hour.

(*Basil shrinks from his arms, and looks at him with somewhat of an upbraiding, at the same time a sorrowful look.*)

Bas. Nay, put me not to death upon the instant ;

I'll see her once again, and then depart.

Ros. See her but once again, and thou art ruin'd !
It must not be — if thou regardest me —

Bas. Well then, it shall not be. Thou hast no mercy !

Ros. Ah ! thou wilt bless me all thine after-life
For what now seems to thee so merciless.

Bas. (*sitting down very dejectedly.*) Mine after-life ! what is mine after-life ?

My day is clos'd ! the gloom of night is come !
A hopeless darkness settles o'er my fate.
I've seen the last look of her heavenly eyes ;
I've heard the last sounds of her blessed voice ;
I've seen her fair form from my sight depart :
My doom is clos'd !

Ros. (hanging over him with pity and affection.)
Alas! my friend!

Bas. In all her lovely grace she disappear'd,
Ah! little thought I never to return!

Ros. Why so desponding? think of warlike
glory.

The fields of fair renown are still before thee;
Who would not burn such noble fame to earn?

Bas. What now are arms, or fair renown to me?
Strive for it those who will — and yet, a while,
Welcome rough war; with all thy scenes of
blood; *(starting from his seat.)*

Thy roaring thunders, and thy clashing steel!
Welcome once more! what have I now to do
But play the brave man o'er again, and die?

Enter ISABELLA.

Isab. (to Bas.) My princess bids me greet
you, noble Count: —

Bas. (starting.) What dost thou say?

Ros. Damn this untimely message!

Isab. The princess bids me greet you, noble
Count:

In the cool grove, hard by the southern gate,
She with her train —

Bas. What, she indeed, herself?

Isab. Herself, my lord, and she requests to
see you.

Bas. Thank heav'n for this! I will be there
anon.

Ros. (*taking hold of him.*) Stay, stay, and do not be a madman still.

Bas. Let go thy hold : what, must I be a brute, A very brute to please thee? no, by heav'n!

(*Breaks from him, and EXIT.*)

Ros. (*striking his forehead.*) All lost again! ill fortune light upon her!

(*Turning eagerly to Isab.*)

And so thy virtuous mistress sends thee here To make appointments, honourable dame?

Isab. Not so, my lord, you must not call it so : The court will hunt to-morrow, and Victoria Would have your noble gen'ral of her train.

Ros. Confound these women, and their artful snares,

Since men will be such fools!

Isab. Yes, grumble at our empire as you will —

Ros. What, boast ye of it? empire do ye call it?

It is your shame! a short-liv'd tyranny, That ends at last in hatred and contempt.

Isab. Nay, but some women do so wisely rule, Their subjects never from the yoke escape.

Ros. Some women do, but they are rarely found. There is not one in all your paltry court Hath wit enough for the ungen'rous task. 'Faith! of you all, not one, but brave Albini, And she disdains it — Good be with you, lady!

(*Going.*)

Isab. O would I could but touch that stubborn heart.

How dearly should he pay for this hour's scorn!
[EXEUNT *severally*.

SCENE IV.

A Summer Apartment in the Country, the windows of which look to a forest. Enter VICTORIA in a hunting dress, followed by ALBINI and ISABELLA, speaking as they enter.

Vict. (to *Alb.*) And so you will not share our sport to-day?

Alb. My days of frolick should ere this be o'er,

But thou, my charge, hast kept me youthful still.
I should most gladly go; but, since the dawn,
A heavy sickness hangs upon my heart;
I cannot hunt to-day.

Vict. I'll stay at home and nurse thee, dear Albini.

Alb. No, no, thou shalt not stay.

Vict. Nay, but I will.

I cannot follow to the cheerful horn,
Whilst thou art sick at home.

Alb. Not very sick.

Rather than thou shouldst stay, my gentle child,
I'll mount my horse, and go e'en as I am.

Vict. Nay, then I'll go, and soon return again.
Meanwhile, do thou be careful of thyself.

Isab. Hark, hark! the shrill horns call us to the field:

Your highness hears it? (*musick without.*)

Vict. Yes, my Isabella;

I hear it, and methinks e'en at the sound
 I vault already on my leathern seat,
 And feel the fiery steed beneath me shake
 His mantled sides, and paw the fretted earth ;
 Whilst I aloft, with gay equestrian grace,
 The low salute of gallant lords return,
 Who, waiting round with eager watchful eye,
 And reined steeds, the happy moments seize.
 O! didst thou never hear, my Isabell,
 How nobly Basil in the field becomes
 His fiery courser's back ?

Isab. They say most gracefully.

Alb. What, is the valiant Count not yet departed ?

Vict. You would not have our gallant Basil go
 When I have bid him stay ? not so, Albini.

Alb. Fye ! reigns that spirit still so strongly in thee,

Which vainly covets all men's admiration,
 And is to others cause of cruel pain ?

O ! would thou couldst subdue it !

Vict. My gentle friend, thou shouldst not be severe :

For now in truth I love not admiration
 As I was wont to do ; in truth I do not.
 But yet, this once my woman's heart excuse,
 For there is something strange in this man's love,
 I never met before, and I must prove it.

Alb. Well, prove it then, be stricken too thyself,
 And bid sweet peace of mind a sad farewell.

Vict. O no! that will not be! 'twill peace restore:

For after this, all folly of the kind
Will quite insipid and disgusting seem;
And so I shall become a prudent maid,
And passing wise at last. (*musick heard without.*)
Hark, hark! again!
All good be with you! I'll return ere long.

[*EXEUNT Victoria and Isabella.*

Alb. (sola.) Ay, go, and every blessing with thee go,

My most tormenting and most pleasing charge!
Like vapour from the mountain stream art thou,
Which lightly rises on the morning air,
And shifts its fleeting form with ev'ry breeze,
For ever varying, and for ever graceful.
Endearing, gen'rous, bountiful and kind;
Vain, fanciful, and fond of worthless praise;
Courteous and gentle, proud and magnificent:
And yet these adverse qualities in thee,
No dissonance, nor striking contrast make;
For still thy good and amiable gifts
The sober dignity of virtue wear not,
And such a 'witching mien thy follies shew,
They make a very idiot of reproof,
And smile it to disgrace.—

What shall I do with thee?—It grieves me much
To hear Count Basil is not yet departed.

When from the chace he comes, I'll watch his
steps,
And speak to him myself.—

O! I could hate her for that poor ambition,
Which silly adoration only claims,
But that I well remember, in my youth
I felt the like — I did not feel it long :
I tore it soon, indignant from my breast,
As that which did degrade a noble mind. [EXIT.

SCENE V.

A very beautiful grove in the forest. Musick and horns heard afar off, whilst huntsmen and dogs appear passing over the stage, at a great distance. Enter VICTORIA and BASIL, as if just alighted from their horses.

Vict. (speaking to attendants without.) Lead on
our horses to the further grove,

And wait us there. —

(To Bas.) This spot so pleasing and so fragrant is,
'Twere sacrilege with horses' hoofs to wear
Its velvet turf, where little elfins dance,
And fairies sport beneath the summer's moon :
I love to tread upon it.

Bas. O! I would quit the chariot of a god
For such delightful footing!

Vict. I love this spot.

Bas. It is a spot where one would live and die.

Vict. See, thro' the twisted boughs of those
high elms,

The sun-beams on the bright'ning foliage play,
And tinge the scaled bark with ruddy brown.
Is it not beautiful ?

Bas. 'Tis passing beautiful,
To see the sun-beams on the foliage play,
(*In a soft voice.*)

And tinge the scaled bark with ruddy brown.

Vict. And here I've stood full often, and admir'd

The graceful bending, o'er that shady pool,
Of yon green willow, whose fair sweepy boughs
So kiss their image on the glassy plain,
And bathe their leafy tresses in the stream.

Bas. And I too love to see its drooping boughs
So kiss their image on the glassy plain,
And bathe their leafy tresses in the stream.

Vict. My lord, it is uncivil in you thus
My very words with mock'ry to repeat.

Bas. Nay, pardon me, did I indeed repeat.
I meant it not ; but when I hear thee speak,
So sweetly dwells thy voice upon mine ear,
My tongue e'en unawares assumes the tone ;
As mothers on their lisping infants gaze,
And catch their broken words. I pri'thee, pardon !

Vict. But we must leave this grove : the birds
fly low :

This should forebode a storm, and yet o'erhead
The sky, bespread with little downy clouds
Of purest white, would seem to promise peace.
How beautiful those pretty snowy clouds !

Bas. Of a most dazzling brightness !

Vict. Nay, nay, a veil that tempers heaven's
brightness,
Of softest, purest white.

Bas. As tho' an angel, in his upward flight,
Had left his mantle floating in mid air.

Vict. Still most unlike a garment ; small and
sever'd :

*(Turning round, and perceiving that he is
gazing at her.)*

But thou regard'st them not.

Bas. Ah ! what should I regard, where should
I gaze ?

For in that far-shot glance, so keenly wak'd,
That sweetly rising smile of admiration,
Far better do I learn how fair heav'n is,
Than if I gaz'd upon the blue serene.

Vict. Remember you have promis'd, gentle
Count,

No more to vex me with such foolish words.

Bas. Ah ! wherefore should my tongue alone
be mute ?

When every look and every motion tell,
So plainly tell, and will not be forbid,
That I adore thee, love thee, worship thee !

(Victoria looks haughty and displeased.)

Ah ! pardon me, I know not what I say.

Ah ! frown not thus ! I cannot see thee frown.

I'll do whate'er thou wilt, I will be silent :

But, O ! a reined tongue, and bursting heart,
Are hard at once to bear.—Wilt thou forgive me ?

Vict. We'll think no more of it ; we'll quit
this spot ;

I do repent me that I led thee here.

But 'twas the fav'rite path of a dear friend ;

Here many a time we wander'd, arm in arm ;
We lov'd this grove, and now that he is absent,
I love to haunt it still. (Basil starts.)

Bas. His fav'rite path — a friend — here arm
in arm —

(*Clasping his hands, and raising them to
his head.*)

Then there is such a one !

(*Drooping his head, and looking distract-
edly upon the ground.*)

I dream'd not of it.

Vict. (*pretending not to see him.*) That little
lane, with woodbine all o'ergrown,
He lov'd so well ! — it is a fragrant path,
Is it not, Count ?

Bas. It is a gloomy one !

Vict. I have, my lord, been wont to think it
cheerful.

Bas. I thought your highness meant to leave
this spot ?

Vict. I do, and by this lane we'll take our way ;
For here he often walk'd with saunt'ring pace,
And listen'd to the woodlark's evening song.

Bas. What, must I on his very footsteps go ?
Accursed be the ground on which he trod !

Vict. And is Count Basil so uncourtly grown,
That he would curse my brother to my face ?

Bas. Your brother ! gracious God ! is it your
brother ?

That dear, that loving friend of whom you spoke,
Is he indeed your brother ?

Vict. He is, indeed, my lord.

Bas. Then heaven bless him ! all good angels
bless him !

I could weep o'er him now, shed blood for him !

I could — O what a foolish heart have I !

*(Walks up and down with a hurried step,
tossing about his arms in transport ; then
stops short, and runs up to Victoria.)*

Is it indeed your brother ?

Vict. It is indeed : what thoughts disturb'd
thee so ?

Bas. I will not tell thee ; foolish thoughts
they were.

Heav'n bless your brother !

Vict. Ay, heav'n bless him too !

I have but him ; would I had two brave brothers,
And thou wert one of them !

Bas. I would fly from thee to earth's utmost
bounds,

Were I thy brother —

And yet methinks, I would I had a sister.

Vict. And wherefore would ye so ?

Bas. To place her near thee,

The soft companion of thy hours to prove,

And, when far distant, sometimes talk of me.

Thou couldst not chide a gentle sister's cares.

Perhaps, when rumour from the distant war,

Uncertain tales of dreadful slaughter bore,

Thou'dst see the tear hang on her pale wan cheek,

And kindly say, How does it fare with Basil ?

Vict. No more of this — indeed there must no more.

A friend's remembrance I will ever bear thee.

But see where Isabella this way comes :

I had a wish to speak with her alone ;

Attend us here, for soon will we return,

And then take horse again. [EXIT.

Bas. (*looking after her for some time.*) See with

what graceful steps she moves along,

Her lovely form, in ev'ry action lovely !

If but the wind her ruffled garment raise,

It twists it into some light pretty fold,

Which adds new grace. Or should some small mishap,

Some tangling branch, her fair attire derange,

What would in others strange or awkward seem,

But lends to her some wild bewitching charm.

See, yonder does she raise her lovely arm

To pluck the dangling hedge-flow'r as she goes ;

And now she turns her head, as tho' she view'd

The distant landscape ; now methinks she walks

With doubtful ling'ring steps — will she look back ?

Ah, no ! yon thicket hides her from my sight.

Bless'd are the eyes that may behold her still,

Nor dread that ev'ry look shall be the last !

And yet she said she would remember me.

I will believe it : Ah ! I must believe it,

Or be the saddest soul that sees the light !

But, lo, a messenger, and from the army !

He brings me tidings ; grant they may be good !

Till now I never fear'd what man might utter ;

I dread his tale, God grant it may be good !

Enter MESSENGER.

From the army ?

Mess. Yes, my lord.

Bas. What tidings bring'st thou ?

Mess. Th' Imperial army, under brave Piscaro,
Have beat the enemy near Pavia's walls.

Bas. Ha! have they fought? and is the battle o'er?

Mess. Yes, conquer'd ; ta'en the French king
prisoner,

Who, like a noble, gallant gentleman,
Fought to the last, nor yielded up his sword
Till, being one amidst surrounding foes,
His arm could do no more.

Bas. What dost thou say? who is made pris'ner?
What king did fight so well?

Mess. The king of France.

Bas. Thou saidst — thy words do ring so in
mine ears,

I cannot catch their sense — the battle's o'er?

Mess. It is, my lord. Piscaro staid your coming,
But could no longer stay. His troops were bold,
Occasion press'd him, and they bravely fought—
They bravely fought, my lord!

Bas. I hear, I hear thee.

Accurs'd am I, that it should wring my heart
To hear they bravely fought! —
They bravely fought, whilst we lay ling'ring here.
O! what a fated blow to strike me thus!
Perdition! shame! disgrace! a damned blow!

Mess. Ten thousand of the enemy are slain;
We too have lost full many a gallant soul.
I view'd the closing armies from afar;
Their close pik'd ranks in goodly order spread,
Which seem'd, alas! when that the fight was o'er,
Like the wild marshes' crop of stately reeds,
Laid with the passing storm. But woe is me!
When to the field I came, what dismal sights!
What waste of life! what heaps of bleeding slain!

Bas. Would I were laid a red, disfigur'd corse,
Amid those heaps! they fought, and we were
absent!

(Walks about distractedly, then stops short.)

Who sent thee here?

Mess. Piscaro sent me to inform Count Basil,
He needs not now his aid, and gives him leave
To march his tardy troops to distant quarters.

Bas. He says so, does he? well, it shall be so.

(Tossing his arms distractedly.)

I will to quarters, narrow quarters go,
Where voice of war shall rouse me forth no more.

[EXIT.]

Mess. I'll follow after him; he is distracted: —
And yet he looks so wild, I dare not do it.

*Enter VICTORIA, as if frightened, followed by
ISABELLA.*

Vict. (to Isab.) Didst thou not mark him as he
pass'd thee too?

Isab. I saw him pass, but with such hasty steps
I had no time.

Vict. I met him with a wild disorder'd air,
In furious haste; he stopp'd distractedly,
And gaz'd upon me with a mournful look,
But pass'd away, and spoke not. Who art thou?
(*To the Messenger.*)

I fear thou art a bearer of bad tidings.

Mess. No, rather good, as I should deem it,
madam,
Altho' unwelcome tidings to Count Basil.
Our army hath a glorious battle won;
Ten thousand French are slain, their monarch
captive.

Vict. (*to Mess.*) Ah, there it is! he was not in
the fight.

Run after him I pray — nay, do not so —
Run to his kinsman, good Count Rosinberg,
And bid him follow him — I pray thee run!

Mess. Nay, lady, by your leave, you seem not
well:

I will conduct you hence, and then I'll go.

Vict. No, no, I'm well enough; I'm very well;
Go, hie thee hence, and do thine errand swiftly.

[*EXIT Messenger.*]

O what a wretch am I! I am to blame!

I only am to blame!

Isab. Nay, wherefore say so?

What have you done that others would not do?

Vict. What have I done? I've fool'd a noble
heart —

I've wreck'd a brave man's honour!

[*EXIT, leaning upon Isabella.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I. — *A dark night ; no moon, but a few stars glimmering ; the stage represents (as much as can be discovered for the darkness) a church-yard with part of a chapel, and a wing of the ducal palace adjoining to it. Enter BASIL, with his hat off, his hair and his dress in disorder, stepping slowly, and stopping several times to listen, as if he was afraid of meeting any one.*

Bas. No sound is here: man is at rest, and I
May near his habitations venture forth,
Like some unblessed creature of the night,
Who dares not meet his face.— Her window's dark;
No streaming light doth from her chamber beam,
That I once more may on her dwelling gaze,
And bless her still. All now is dark for me!

(Pauses for some time, and looks upon the graves.)
How happy are the dead, who quietly rest
Beneath these stones! each by his kindred laid,
Still in a hallow'd neighbourhood with those,
Who when alive his social converse shar'd:
And now perhaps some dear surviving friend
Doth here at times the grateful visit pay,
Read with sad eyes his short memorial o'er,
And bless his mem'ry still! —
But I, like a vile outcast of my kind,
In some lone spot must lay m' unburied corse,
To rot above the earth; where, if perchance

The steps of human wand'rer e'er approach,
He'll stand aghast, and flee the horrid place,
With dark imaginations frightful made
The haunt of damned sprites. O cursed wretch !
I' the fair and honour'd field shouldst thou have
died,

Where brave friends, proudly smiling thro'
their tears,

Had pointed out the spot where Basil lay !

(A light seen in Victoria's window.)

But, ha ! the wonted, welcome light appears.

How bright within I see her chamber wall !

Athwart it too, a dark'ning shadow moves,

A slender woman's form : it is herself !

What means that motion of its clasped hands ?

That drooping head ? alas ! is she in sorrow ?

Alas ! thou sweet enchantress of the mind,

Whose voice was gladness, and whose presence
bliss,

Art thou unhappy too ? I've brought thee woe ;

It is for me thou weep'st. Ah ! were it so,

Fall'n as I am, I yet could life endure,

In some dark den from human sight conceal'd,

So, that I sometimes from my haunt might steal,

To see and love thee still. No, no, poor wretch !

She weeps thy shame, she weeps, and scorns thee
too.

She moves again ; e'en darkly imag'd thus,

How lovely is that form !

(Pauses, still looking at the window.)

To be so near thee, and for ever parted !

For ever lost ! what art thou now to me ?
Shall the departed gaze on thee again ?
Shall I glide past thee in the midnight hour,
Whilst thou perceiv'st it not, and think'st perhaps
'Tis but the mournful breeze that passes by ?

*(Pauses again, and gazes at the window,
till the light disappears.)*

'Tis gone, 'tis gone ! these eyes have seen their
last !

The last impression of her heavenly form :
The last sight of those walls wherein she lives :
The last blest ray of light from human dwelling.
I am no more a being of this world.

Farewell ! farewell ! all now is dark for me !
Come fated deed ! come horror and despair !
Here lies my dreadful way.

Enter GEOFFRY, from behind a tomb.

Geof. O ! stay, my gen'ral !

Bas. Art thou from the grave ?

Geof. O my brave gen'ral ! do you know me
not ?

I am old Geoffry, the old maimed soldier,
You did so nobly honour.

Bas. Then go thy way, for thou art honourable ;
Thou hast no shame, thou need'st not seek the
dark

Like fallen, fameless men. I pray thee go !

Geof. Nay, speak not thus, my noble general !
Ah ! speak not thus ! thou'rt brave, thou'rt ho-
nour'd still.

'Thy soldier's fame is far too surely rais'd
To be o'erthrown with one unhappy chance.
I've heard of thy brave deeds with swelling heart,
And yet shall live to cast my cap in air
At glorious tales of thee. —

Bas. Forbear, forbear ! thy words but wring
my soul.

Geof. O ! pardon me ! I am old maimed
Geoffry.

O ! do not go ! I've but one hand to hold thee.

*(Laying hold of Basil as he attempts to go
away. Basil stops, and looks round upon
him with softness.)*

Bas. Two would not hold so well, old honour'd
vet'ran !

What wouldst thou have me do ?

Geof. Return, my lord ; for love of blessed
heaven,

Seek not such desperate ways ! where would
you go ?

Bas. Does Geoffry ask where should a soldier
go

To hide disgrace ? there is no place but one.

(Struggling to get free.)

Let go thy foolish hold, and force me not
To do some violence to thy hoary head —

What, wilt thou not ? nay, then it must be so.

(Breaks violently from him, and EXIT.)

Geof. Curs'd, feeble hand ! he's gone to seek
perdition !

I cannot run. Where is that stupid hind ?

He should have met me here. Holla, Fernando !

Enter FERNANDO.

We've lost him, he is gone, he's broke from me !
Did I not bid thee meet me early here,
For that he has been known to haunt this place ?

Fer. Which way has he gone ?

Geof. Towards the forest, if I guess aright.
But do thou run with speed to Rosinberg,
And he will follow him : run swiftly, man !

[*EXEUNT.*]

SCENE II.

A Wood, wild and savage ; an entry to a cave, very much tangled with brushwood, is seen in the back-ground. The time represents the dawn of morning. BASIL is discovered standing near the front of the stage in a thoughtful posture, with a couple of pistols laid by him on a piece of projecting rock ; he pauses for some time.

Bas. (alone.) What shall I be some few short moments hence ?

Why ask I now ? who from the dead will rise
To tell me of that awful state unknown ?

But be it what it may, or bliss, or torment,
Annihilation, dark, and endless rest,

Or some dread thing, man's wildest range of
thought

Hath never yet conceiv'd, that change I'll dare
Which makes me any thing but what I am.

BASIL: A TRAGEDY.

I can bear scorpions' stings, tread fields of fire
In frozen gulfs of cold eternal lie,
Be toss'd aloft through tracks of endless void,
But cannot live in shame.—(*Pauses.*) O impious
thought!

Will the great God of mercy, mercy have
On all but those who are most miserable?
Will he not punish with a pitying hand
The poor, fall'n, froward child? (*Pauses.*)
And shall I then against his will offend,
Because he is most good and merciful?
O! horrid baseness! what, what shall I do?
I'll think no more — it turns my dizzy brain —
It is too late to think — what must be, must be —
I cannot live, therefore I needs must die.

*(Takes up the pistols, and walks up and down,
looking wildly around him, then discovering
the cave's mouth.)*

Here is an entry to some darksome cave,
Where an uncoffin'd corse may rest in peace,
And hide its foul corruption from the earth.
The threshold is unmark'd by mortal foot.
I'll do it here.

*(Enters the cave and EXIT; a deep silence; then
the report of a pistol is heard from the cave,
and soon after, enter Rosinberg, Valtomer,
two Officers and Soldiers, almost at the same
moment, by different sides of the stage.)*

Ros. This way the sound did come.

Valt. How came ye, soldiers? heard ye that
report?

1st Sol. We heard it, and it seem'd to come
from hence,
Which made us this way hie.

Ros. A horrid fancy darts across my mind.
(*A groan heard from the cave.*)

(*To Valt.*) Ha! heard'st thou that?

Valt. Methinks it is the groan of one in pain.
(*A second groan.*)

Ros. Ha! there again!

Valt. From this cave's mouth, so dark and
choak'd with weeds,

It seems to come.

Ros. I'll enter first.

1st Off. My Lord, the way is tangled o'er with
briers:

Hard by, a few short paces to the left,

There is another mouth of easier access;

I pass'd it even now.

Ros. Then shew the way. [EXEUNT.]

SCENE III.

The inside of the cave. BASIL discovered lying on the ground, with his head raised a little upon a few stones and earth, the pistols lying beside him, and blood upon his breast. Enter ROSINBERG, VALTOMER, and OFFICERS. Rosinberg, upon seeing Basil, stops short with horror, and remains motionless for some time.

Valt. Great God of heaven! what a sight is this!
(*Rosinberg runs to Basil, and stoops down by his side.*)

Ros. O Basil! O my friend! what hast thou done?

Bas. (*covering his face with his hand.*) Why art thou come? I thought to die in peace.

Ros. Thou know'st me not — I am thy Rosinberg,

Thy dearest, truest friend, thy loving kinsman!
Thou dost not say to me, Why art thou come?

Bas. Shame knows no kindred: I am fall'n, disgrac'd;

My fame is gone, I cannot look upon thee.

Ros. My Basil, noble spirit! talk not thus!
The greatest mind untoward fate may prove:
Thou art our gen'rous, valiant leader still,
Fall'n as thou art — and yet thou art not fall'n;
Who says thou art, must put his harness on,
And prove his words in blood.

Bas. Ah, Rosinberg! this is no time to boast!
I once had hopes a glorious name to gain;
Too proud of heart, I did too much aspire;
The hour of trial came, and found me wanting.
Talk not of me, but let me be forgotten.—
And O! my friend! something upbraids me here,
(*Laying his hand on his breast.*)

For that I now remember how oft-times
I have usurp'd it o'er thy better worth,
Most vainly teaching where I should have learnt;
But thou wilt pardon me. —

Ros. (*taking Basil's hand, and pressing it to his breast.*) Rend not my heart in twain!
O! talk not thus!

I knew thou wert superiour to myself,
And to all men beside: thou wert my pride;
I paid thee def'rance with a willing heart.

Bas. It was delusion, all delusion, Rosinberg!
I feel my weakness now, I own my pride.
Give me thy hand, my time is near the close:
Do this for me: thou know'st my love, Victoria—

Ros. O curse that woman! she it is alone —
She has undone us all!

Bas. It doubles unto me the stroke of death
To hear thee name her thus. O curse her not!
The fault is mine; she's gentle, good and blame-
less —

Thou wilt not then my dying wish fulfil?

Ros. I will! I will! what wouldst thou have
me do?

Bas. See her when I am gone; be gentle with
her;
And tell her that I bless'd her in my death;
E'en in my agonies I lov'd and bless'd her.
Wilt thou do this? —

Ros. I'll do what thou desir'st.

Bas. I thank thee, Rosinberg; my time draws
near.

(Raising his head a little, and perceiving Officers.)
Is there not some one here? are we alone?

Ros. (making a sign for the Officers to retire.)
'Tis but a sentry, to prevent intrusion.

Bas. Thou know'st this desp'rate deed from
sacred rites

Hath shut me out: I am unbless'd of men,

And what I am in sight of th' awful God,
I dare not think ; when I am gone, my friend,
O! let a good man's prayers to heav'n ascend
For an offending spirit! — Pray for me.

What thinkest thou? although an outcast here,
May not some heavenly mercy still be found?

Ros. Thou wilt find mercy — my beloved
Basil —

It cannot be that thou shouldst be rejected.
I will with bended knee — I will implore —
It choaks mine utterance — I will pray for thee —

Bas. This comforts me — thou art a loving friend.
(*A noise without.*)

Ros. (*to Off. without.*) What noise is that?

Enter VALTOMER.

Valt. (*to Ros.*) My lord, the soldiers all insist
to enter.

What shall I do? they will not be denied :
They say that they will see their noble gen'ral.

Bas. Ah, my brave fellows! do they call me so?

Ros. Then let them come.

(*Enter Soldiers, who gather round BASIL,
and look mournfully upon him ; he holds out
his hand to them with a faint smile.*)

Bas. My gen'rous soldiers, this is kindly meant.
I'm low i' the dust; God bless you all, brave hearts!

1st Sol. And God bless you, my noble, noble
gen'ral!

We'll never follow such a leader more.

2d Sol. Ah! had you staid with us, my noble
gen'ral,
We would have died for you.

(3d Soldier endeavours next to speak, but cannot ; and kneeling down by Basil, covers his face with his cloak. Rosinberg turns his face to the wall and weeps.)

Bas. (in a very faint broken voice.) Where art
thou? do not leave me, Rosinberg —
Come near to me — these fellows make me weep :
I have no power to weep — give me thy hand —
I love to feel thy grasp — my heart beats strangely —
It beats as tho' its breathings would be few —
Remember —

Ros. Is there aught thou wouldst desire?

Bas. Nought but a little earth to cover me,
And lay the smooth sod even with the ground —
Let no stone mark the spot — give no offence.
I fain would say — what can I say to thee?

(A deep pause ; after a feeble struggle, Basil expires.)

1st Sol. That motion was his last.

2d Sol. His spirit's fled.

1st Sol. God grant it peace! it was a noble
spirit!

4th Sol. The trumpet's sound did never rouse
a braver.

1st Sol. Alas! no trumpet e'er shall rouse him
more,
Until the dreadful blast that wakes the dead.

2d Sol. And when that sounds it will not
wake a braver.

3d Sol. How pleasantly he shar'd our hardest
toil!

Our coarsest food the daintiest fare he made.

4th Sol. Ay, many a time i' the cold damp
plain has he

With cheerful count'nance cried, " Good rest,
my hearts!"

Then wrapp'd him in his cloak, and laid him
down

E'en like the meanest soldier in the field.

(Rosinberg *all this time continues hanging
over the body, and gazing upon it. Val-
tomer now endeavours to draw him away.*)

Valt. This is too sad, my lord.

Ros. There, seest thou how he lies? so fix'd,
so pale?

Ah! what an end is this! thus lost! thus fall'n!

To be thus taken in his middle course,

Where he so nobly strove; till cursed passion

Came like a sun-stroke on his mid-day toil,

And cut the strong man down. O Basil! Basil!

Valt. Forbear, my friend, we must not sorrow
here.

Ros. He was the younger brother of my soul.

Valt. Indeed, my lord, it is too sad a sight.

Time calls us, let the body be remov'd.

Ros. He was — O! he was like no other man!

Valt. (*still endeavouring to draw him away.*)

Nay, now forbear.

Ros. I lov'd him from his birth!

Valt. Time presses, let the body be remov'd.

Ros. What say'st thou?

Valt. Shall we not remove him hence?

Ros. He has forbid it, and has charg'd me well
To leave his grave unknown? for that the church
All sacred rites to the self-slain denies.

He would not give offence.

1st Sol. What! shall our gen'ral, like a very
wretch,

Be laid unhonour'd in the common ground?

No last salute to bid his soul farewell?

No warlike honours paid? it shall not be.

2d Sol. Laid thus? no, by the blessed light of
heav'n!

In the most holy spot in Mantua's walls

He shall be laid; in face of day be laid:

And tho' black priests should curse us in the teeth,

We will fire o'er him whilst our hands have power

To grasp a musket.

Several Soldiers. Let those who dare forbid it!

Ros. My brave companions, be it as you will.

(Spreading out his arms as if he would embrace the Soldiers. — They prepare to remove the body.)

Valt. Nay, stop a while, we will not move it
now,

For see a mournful visitor appears,

And must not be denied.

Enter VICTORIA and ISABELLA.

Vict. I thought to find him here, where has he
fled?

(Rosinberg points to the body without speaking ; Victoria shrieks out and falls into the arms of Isabella.)

Isab. Alas ! my gentle mistress, this will kill thee.

Vict. (recovering.) Unloose thy hold, and let me look upon him.

O ! horrid, horrid sight ! my ruin'd Basil !

Is this the sad reward of all thy love ?

O ! I have murder'd thee !

(Kneels down by the body, and bends over it.)

These wasted streams of life ! this bloody wound !

(Laying her hand upon his heart.)

Is there no breathing here ? all still ! all cold !

Open thine eyes, speak, be thyself again,

And I will love thee, serve thee, follow thee,

In spite of all reproach. Alas ! alas !

A lifeless corse art thou for ever laid,

And dost not hear my call. —

Ros. No, madam ; now your pity comes too late.

Vict. Dost thou upbraid me ? O ! I have deserv'd it !

Ros. No, madam, no, I will not now upbraid :

But woman's grief is like a summer storm,

Short as it violent is ; in gayer scenes,

Where soon thou shalt in giddy circles blaze,

And play the airy goddess of the day,

Thine eye, perchance, amidst th' observing crowd,

Shall mark th' indignant face of Basil's friend,

And then it will upbraid.

Vict. No, never, never ! thus it shall not be.

To the dark, shaded cloister wilt thou go,
Where sad and lonely, thro' the dismal grate
Thou'lt spy my wasted form, and then upbraid
me.

Ros. Forgive me, heed me not ; I'm griev'd
at heart ;

I'm fretted, gall'd, all things are hateful to me.
If thou didst love my friend, I will forgive thee ;
I must forgive thee : with his dying breath
He bade me tell thee, that his latest thoughts
Were love to thee ; in death he lov'd and bless'd
thee.

*(Victoria goes to throw herself upon the body,
but is prevented by Valtomer and Isabella,
who support her in their arms, and endeavour
to draw her away from it.)*

Vict. Oh ! force me not away ! by his cold corse
Let me lie down and weep. O ! Basil, Basil !
The gallant and the brave ! how hast thou lov'd
me !

If there is any holy kindness in you,
(To Isab. and Valt.)

Tear me not hence.

For he lov'd me in thoughtless folly lost,
With all my faults, most worthless of his love ;
And him I'll love in the low bed of death,
In horror and decay. —

Near his lone tomb I'll spend my wretched days
In humble pray'r for his departed spirit :
Cold as his grave shall be my earthy bed,
As dark my cheerless cell. Force me not hence.

I will not go, for grief hath made me strong.

(Struggling to get loose.)

Ros. Do not withhold her, leave her sorrow free.

(They let her go, and she throws herself upon the body in an agony of grief.)

It doth subdue the sternness of my grief

To see her mourn him thus. — Yet I must curse. —

Heav'n's curses light upon her damned father,

Whose crooked policy has wrought this wreck !

Isab. If he has done it, you are well reveng'd,
For all his hidden plots detected are.

Gauriceio, for some int'rest of his own,

His master's secret dealings with the foe

Has to Lanoy betray'd ; who straight hath sent,

On the behalf of his imperial lord,

A message full of dreadful threats to Mantua.

His discontented subjects aid him not ;

He must submit to the degrading terms

A haughty conqu'ring power will now impose.

Ros. And art thou sure of this ?

Isab. I am, my lord.

Ros. Give me thy hand, I'm glad on't, O ! I'm
glad on't !

It should be so ! how like a hateful ape

Detected, grinning, 'midst his pilfer'd hoard,

A cunning man appears, whose secret frauds

Are open'd to the day ! scorn'd, hooted, mock'd !

Scorn'd by the very fools who most admir'd

His worthless art. But when a great mind falls,

The noble nature of man's gen'rous heart

Doth bear him up against the shame of ruin ;

With gentle censure using but his faults
As modest means to introduce his praise ;
For pity like a dewy twilight comes
To close th' oppressive splendour of his day,
And they who but admir'd him in his height,
His alter'd state lament, and love him fall'n.

[EXEUNT.]

END OF BASIL.

THE TRYAL:
A COMEDY.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN :

MR. WITHRINGTON.

MR. HARWOOD.

COLONEL HARDY.

SIR LOFTUS PRETTYMAN.

MR. OPAL.

MR. ROYSTON.

HUMPHRY.

JONATHAN.

THOMAS.

Servants, &c.

WOMEN :

AGNES, }
MARIANE, } *Nieces to Withrington.*

MISS ESTON.

MRS. BETTY, *Maid to Agnes.*

* * *Scene in Bath, and in Mr. WITHRINGTON'S
house in the environs of Bath.*

THE TRYAL.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — MR. WITHRINGTON'S house : *Enter WITHRINGTON and his two Nieces hanging upon his arms, coaxing him in a playful manner as they advance towards the front of the Stage.*

With. Poo, poo, get along, young gipsies, and don't tease me any more.

Ag. So we will, my good Sir, when you have granted our suit.

Mar. Do, dear uncle, it will be so pleasant !

With. Get along, get along. Don't think to wheedle me into it. It would be very pleasant, truly, to see an old fellow, with a wig upon his bald pate, making one in a holiday mummerly with a couple of madcaps.

Ag. Nay, don't lay the fault upon the wig, good Sir, for it is as youthful, and as sly, and as saucy looking as the best head of hair in the county. As for your old wig, indeed, there was so much curmudgeon-like austerity about it, that young people fled from before it, as, I dare say, the birds do at present ; for I am sure it is stuck up in some cherry-orchard, by this time, to frighten away the sparrows.

With. You are mistaken, young mistress, it is up stairs in my wig-box.

Ag. Well, I am glad it is anywhere but upon your pate, uncle. (*Turning his face towards Mariane.*) Look at him, pray ! is he not ten years younger since he wore it ? Is there one bit of an old grumbler to be seen about him now ?

Mar. He is no more like the man he was, than I am like my godmother. (*Clapping his shoulder.*) You must even do as we have bid you, Sir, for this excuse will never bring you off.

With. Poo, poo, it is a foolish girl's whimsey : I'll have nothing to do with it.

Ag. It is a reasonable woman's desire, gentle guardian, and you must consent to it. For if I am to marry at all, I am resolved to have a respectable man, and a man who is attached to me ; and to find out such a one, in my present situation, is impossible. I am provoked beyond all patience with your old greedy lords, and match-making aunts, introducing their poor noodle heirs-apparent to me. Your ambitious esquires, and proud obsequious baronets, are intolerable ; and your rakish younger brothers are nauseous : such creatures only surround me, whilst men of sense stand at a distance, and think me as foolish as the company I keep. One would swear I was made of amber, to attract all the dust and chaff of the community.

With. There is some truth in this, 'faith.

Ag. You see how it is with me : so, my dear,

loving, good uncle, (*Coaxing him.*) do let Mariane take my place for a little while. We are newly come to Bath ; nobody knows us : we have been but at one ball, and as Mariane looks so much better than me, she has already been mistaken for the heiress, and I for her portionless cousin : I have told you how we shall manage it ; do lend us your assistance !

With. So in the disguise of a portionless spinster, you are to captivate some man of sense, I suppose ?

Ag. I would fain have it so.

With. Go, go, thou art a fool, Agnes ! who will fall in love with a little ordinary girl like thee ? why, there is not one feature in thy face that a man would give a farthing for.

Mar. You are very saucy, uncle.

Ag. I should despair of my beauty to be sure, since I am reckoned so much like you, my dear Sir ; yet old nurse told me that a rich lady, a great lady, and the prettiest lady that ever wore silk, fell in love, once on a time, with Mr. Anthony, and would have followed him to the world's end too, if it had not been for an old hunk of a father, who deserved to be drubbed for his pains. Don't you think he did, Sir ?

With. (*endeavouring to look angry.*) Old nurse is a fool, and you are an impudent hussy. I'll hear no more of this nonsense. (*Breaks from them, and goes towards the door : they run after him, and draw him back again.*)

Ag. Nay, good Sir, we have not quite done with you yet: grant our request, and then scamper off as you please.

Mar. I'll hold both your arms till you grant it.

With. (to *Mar.*) And what makes you so eager about it, young lady? you expect, I suppose, to get a husband by the trick. O fy, fy! the poorest girl in England would blush at such a thought, who calls herself an honest one.

Ag. And Mariane would reject the richest man in England who could harbour such a suspicion. But give yourself no uneasiness about this, Sir; she need not go a husband-hunting, for she is already engaged. — (*Mariane looks frightened, and makes signs to Agnes over her uncle's shoulder, which she answers with a smile of encouragement.*)

With. Engaged! she is very good, truly, to manage all this matter herself, being afraid to give me any trouble, I suppose. And pray what fool has she picked out from the herd, to enter into this precious engagement with?

Ag. A foolish fellow enough to be sure, your favourite nephew, cousin Edward.

With. Hang the silly booby! how could he be such an idiot! but it can't be, it shan't be! — it is folly to put myself into a passion about it. (*To Mariane, who puts her hand on his shoulder to soothe him.*) Hold off your hands, Ma'am! This is news indeed to amuse me with of a morning.

Ag. Yes, uncle, and I can tell you more news; for they are not only engaged, but as

soon as he returns from abroad they are to be married.

With. Well, well, let them marry in the devil's name, and go a-begging if they please.

Ag. No, gentle guardian, they need not go a-begging ; they will have a good fortune to support them.

With. Yes, yes, they will get a prize in the lottery, or find out the philosopher's stone, and coin their old shoes into guineas.

Ag. No, Sir, it is not that way the fortune is to come.

With. No ; he has been following some knight-errant, then, I suppose, and will have an island in the South Sea for his pains.

Ag. No, you have not guessed it yet. (*Stroking his hand gently.*) Did you never hear of a good, kind, rich uncle of theirs, the generous Mr. Withrington ? he is to settle a handsome provision upon them as soon as they are married, and leave them his fortune at last.

With. (*lifting up his hands.*) Well, I must say thou art the sauciest little jade in the kingdom ! But did you never hear that this worthy uncle of theirs, having got a new wig, which makes him ten years younger than he was, is resolved to embrace the opportunity, and seek out a wife for himself ?

Ag. O ! that is nothing to the purpose ; for what I have said about the fortune must happen, though he should, seek out a score of wives for himself.

With. Must happen ! but I say it shall not happen. Whether should you or I know best ?

Ag. Why me, to be sure.

With. Ha, ha, ha ! how so, baggage ?

Ag. (*resting her arm on his shoulder, looking archly in his face.*) You don't know, perhaps, that when I went to Scotland last summer, I travelled far, and far, as the tale says, and farther than I can tell, till I came to the Isle of Sky, where every body has the second sight, and has nothing to do but tear a little hole in a tartan-plaidy, and peering through it, in this manner, sees every thing past, present, and to come. Now, you must know, I gave an old woman half-a-crown and a roll of tobacco for a peep or two through her plaid ; and what do you think I saw, uncle ?

With. The devil dancing a hornpipe, I suppose.

Ag. There was somebody dancing to be sure, but it was not the devil, though. Who do you think it was now ?

With. Poo, poo !

Ag. It was uncle himself, at Mariane's wedding, leading down the first dance with the bride. I saw a sheet of parchment in a corner, too, signed with his own blessed hand, and a very handsome settlement it was. So he led down the first dance himself, and we all followed after him, as merry as so many hay-makers.

With. Thou hast had a sharp sight, 'faith !

Ag. And I took a second peep through the plaidy, and what do you think I saw then, Sir ?

With. Nay, prate on as thou wilt.

Ag. A genteel family-house, where Edward and Mariane dwelt, and several little brats running up and down in it. Some of them so tall, and so tall, and some of them no taller than this. And there came good uncle amongst them, and they all flocked about him so merrily; every body was so glad to see him, the very scullions from the kitchen were glad; and methought he looked as well pleased himself as any of them. Don't you think he did, Sir?

With. Have done with thy prating.

Ag. I have not done yet, good Sir; for I took another peep still, and then I saw a most dismal changed family indeed. There was a melancholy sick bed set out, in the best chamber; every face was sad, and all the children were weeping. There was one dark-eyed rogue amongst them, called little Anthony, and he threw away his bread and butter, and roared like a young bull, for woe's me! old uncle was dying. (*Observing Withrington affected.*) But old uncle recovered though, and looked as stout as a veteran again. So I gave the old woman her plaidy, and would not look through any more.

With. Thou art the wildest little witch in the world, and wilt never be at rest till thou hast got every thing thine own way, I believe.

Ag. I thank you, I thank you, dear uncle! (*leaping round his neck,*) it shall be even so, and I shall have my own little boon into the bargain.

With. I did not say so.

Ag. But I know it will be so, and many thanks to you, my dear good uncle ! (*Mariane ventures to come from behind, — Withrington looks gently to her, she holds out her hand, he hesitates, and Agnes joins their hands together, giving them a hearty shake.*)

With. Come, come, let me get away from you now : you are a couple of insinuating gipsies.

[*EXIT, hastily.*

Mar. (*embracing Agnes.*) Well, heaven bless thee, my sweet Agnes ! thou hast done marvels for me. You gave me a fright though ; I thought we were ruined.

Ag. O ! I knew I should get the better of him some way or other. What a good, worthy heart he has ! you don't know how dearly I love this old uncle of ours.

Mar. I wonder how it is. I used to think him severe and unreasonable, with his fiddle fiddle fancies about delicacy and decorum ; but since you came amongst us, Agnes, you have so coaxed him, and laughed at him, and played with him, that he has become almost as frolicsome as ourselves.

Ag. Let us set about our project immediately. Nobody knows us here but lady Fade and Miss Eston : we must let them both into the secret : Lady Fade is confined with bad health, and though Miss Eston, I believe, would rather tell a secret than hold her tongue, yet as long as there are streets and carriages, and balls and ribbons, and

feathers and fashions, to talk of, there can be no great danger from her.

Mar. O! we shall do very well. How I long to frolick it away, in all the rich trappings of heirship, amongst those sneaking wretches, the fortune-hunters! They have neglected me as a poor girl, but I will play the deuce amongst them as a rich one.

Ag. You will acquit yourself very handsomely, I dare say, and find no lack of admirers.

Mar. I have two or three in my eye just now, but of all men living I have set my heart upon humbling Sir Loftus. He insulted a friend of mine last winter, to ingratiate himself with an envious woman of quality, but I will be revenged upon him; O! how I will scorn him, and toss up my nose at him.

Ag. That is not the way to be revenged upon him, silly girl! He is haughty and reserved in his manners; and though not altogether without understanding, has never suffered a higher idea to get footing in his noddle than that of appearing a man of consequence and fashion; and though he has no happiness but in being admired as a fine gentleman, and no existence but at an assembly, he appears there with all the haughty gravity, and careless indifference of a person superior to such paltry amusements. Such a man as this must be laughed at, not scorned; contempt must be his portion.

Mar. He shall have it then. And as for his

admirer and imitator, Jack Opal, who has for these ten years past so successfully performed every kind of fine gentlemanship, that every new fool brought into fashion, any kind of bad treatment, I suppose, that happens to come into my head will be good enough for him.

Ag. Quite good enough. You have set him down for one of your admirers too?

Mar. Yes, truly, and a great many more besides.

Ag. Did you observe in the ball-room last night, a genteel young man, with dark grey eyes, and a sensible countenance, but with so little of the foppery of the fashion about him, that one took him at a distance for a much older man?

Mar. Wore he not a plain brownish coat? and stood he not very near us great part of the evening?

Ag. Yes, the very same. Pray endeavour to attract him, Mariane.

Mar. If you are very desirous to see him in my train, I will.

Ag. No, not desirous, neither.

Mar. Then wherefore should I try?

Ag. Because I would have you try every art to win him, and I would not have him to be won.

Mar. O! I comprehend it now! this is the sensible man we are in quest of.

Ag. I shall not be sorry if it proves so. I have inquired who he is, as I shall tell you by and by, and what I have learnt of him I like. Is not his appearance prepossessing?

Mar. I don't know, he is too grave and dignified for such a girl as thou art ; I fear we shall waste our labour upon him.

Ag. But he does not look always so. He kept very near me, if it did not look vain, I should say followed me all the evening, and many a varied expression his countenance assumed. But when I went away arm in arm with my uncle, in our usual good-humoured way, I shall never forget the look of pleasant approbation with which he followed me. I had learnt but a little while before the mistake which the company made in regard to us, and at that moment the idea of this project came across my mind like a flash of lightning.

Mar. Very well, gentle cousin ; the task you assign me is pleasing to my humour, and the idea of promoting your happiness at the same time will make it delightful. Let me see, how many lovers shall I have — one, two, three. (*Counting on her fingers.*)

Ag. I can tell you of one lover more than you wot of.

Mar. Pray who is he ?

Ag. Our distant cousin, the great 'squire, and man of business, from ——shire: he writes to my uncle that he will be in Bath to-day, upon business of the greatest importance, which he explains to him in three pages of close-written paper ; but whether he is to court me for himself, or for his son, or to solicit a great man,

who is here, for a place, no mortal on earth can discover.

Mar. Well, let him come, I shall manage them all. O! if my Edward were here just now, how he would laugh at us!

Enter SERVANT.

Ser. Miss Eston.

Mar. Let us run out of her way, and say we are not at home. She will sit and talk these two hours.

Ag. But you forgot, we have something to say to her. (*To the Servant.*) Shew her up stairs to my dressing-room. [EXIT Servant.]

Mar. Pray let us run up stairs before her, or she will arrest us here with her chat.

[EXEUNT.]

Miss Eston. (without.) And it is a very bad thing for all that; I never could abide it. I wonder your master don't stop (*Enters, walking straight across the stage, still speaking.*) up those nasty chinks; there is such a wind in the hall, 'tis enough to give one a hoarseness. By-the-bye, Mrs. Mumblecake is sadly to-day; has your lady sent to inquire for her, William? I wonder if her (*EXIT, still talking without.*) old coachman has left her? I saw a new face on the, &c. &c.

SCENE II.

The fields before MR. WITHRINGTON'S house.

Enter AGNES, MARIANE, and MISS ESTON, who seem still busy talking, from the house, and passing over the Stage, arm in arm, Exeunt. Enter by the same side by which they went out, SIR LOFTUS PRETTYMAN, and HARWOOD, who stands looking behind him, as if he followed something with his eyes very eagerly.

Sir Loft. (*advancing to the front of the stage, and speaking to himself.*) How cursedly unlucky this is now ! if she had come out but a few moments sooner, I should have passed her walking arm in arm with a British peer. How provokingly these things always happen with me ! (*Observing Harwood.*) What ! is he staring after her too ? (*Aloud.*) What are you looking at, Harwood ? does she walk well ?

Har. I can't tell how she walks, but I could stand and gaze after her till the sun went down upon me.

Sir Loft. She is a fine woman, I grant you.

Har. (*vastly pleased.*) I knew she would please, it is impossible she should not ! There is something so delightful in the play of her countenance, it would even make a plain woman beautiful.

Sir Loft. She is a fine woman, and that is no

despicable praise from one who is accustomed to the elegance of fashionable beauty.

Har. I would not compare her to any thing so trifling and insipid.

Sir Loft. She has one advantage which fashionable beauty seldom possesses.

Har. What do you mean?

Sir Loft. A large fortune.

Har. (*looking disappointed.*) It is not the heiress I mean.

Sir Loft. Is it t'other girl you are raving about? She is showy at a distance, I admit, but as awkward as a dairy-maid when near you; and her tongue goes as fast as if she were repeating a paternoster.

Har. What, do you think I am silly enough to be caught with that magpie?

Sir Loft. Who is it then, Harwood? I see nobody with Miss Withrington but Miss Eston, and the poor little creature her cousin.

Har. Good God! what a contemptible perversion of taste do interest and fashion create! But it is all affectation. (*Looking contemptuously at him.*)

Sir Loft. (*smiling contemptuously in return.*) Ha, ha, ha! I see how it is with you, Harwood, and I beg pardon too. The lady is very charming, I dare say; upon honour I never once looked in her face. She is a dependent relation of Miss Withrington's, I believe: now I never take notice of such girls, for if you do it once, they expect you to do it again. I am sparing of my attentions,

that she on whom I really bestow them may have the more reason to boast.

Har. You are right, Prettyman: she who boasts of your attentions should receive them all herself, that nobody else may know their real worth.

Sir Loft. You are severe this morning, Mr. Harwood, but you do not altogether comprehend me, I believe. I know perhaps more of the world than a studious Templar can be supposed to do; and I assure you, men of fashion, upon this principle, are sparing of their words too, that they may be listened to more attentively when they do speak.

Har. You are very right still, Sir Loftus; for if they spoke much, I'll be hang'd if they would get any body to listen to them at all.

Sir Loft. (haughtily.) There is another reason why men of fashion are not profuse of their words: inferiour people are apt to forget themselves, and despise what is too familiar.

Har. Don't take so much pains to make me comprehend that the more fools speak the more people will despise them; I never had a clearer conviction of it in my life.

Sir Loft. (haughtily.) Good morning, Sir: I see Lord Saunter in the other walk, and I must own I prefer the company of one who knows, at least the common rules of politeness. [EXIT.

Har. (alone.) What a contemptible creature it is! He would prefer the most affected idiot, who boasts a little fashion or consequence, as he calls

it, to the most beautiful native character in the world. Here comes another fool, who has been gazing too, but I will not once mention her before him.

Enter OPAL.

Op. Good morning, Harwood: I have been fortunate just now; I have met some fine girls, 'faith!

Har. I am glad you have met with any thing so agreeable: they are all equally charming to you, I suppose.

Op. Nay, Harwood, I know how to distinguish. There is a little animated creature amongst them, all life and spirit: on my soul I could almost be in love with her.

Har. Ha! thou hast more discernment than I reckoned upon. If that goose, Sir Loftus, did not spoil thee, Jack, thou wouldst be a very good fellow after all. Why, I must tell you, my good Opal, that lady whom you admire is the sweetest little gipsey in England.

Op. Is she indeed? I wish I had taken a better look of her face then; but she wears such a cursed plume of blue feathers nodding over her nose, there is scarcely one half of it to be seen.

Har. (*staring at him with astonishment.*) As I breathe! he has fallen in love with the magpie!

Op. And what is so surprising in this, pray? Does not all the world allow Miss Withrington the heiress to be a fine woman?

Har. That is not the heiress, Jack, (*pointing off the stage.*) the tall lady in the middle is her. But if your Dulcinea could coin her words into farthings, she would be one of the best matches in the kingdom.

Op. Pest take it! she was pointed out to me as Miss Withrington. Pest take my stupidity! the girl is well enough, but she is not altogether —

(*Mumbling to himself.*)

Har. So you bestowed all your attention on this blue-feather'd lady, and let the other two pass by unnoticed.

Op. No, not unnoticed neither: Miss Withrington is too fine a figure to be overlooked any where; and for the other poor little creature, who hung upon her arm so familiarly, I could not help observing her too, because I wondered Miss Withrington allowed such a dowdy-looking thing to walk with her in public. Faith! I sent a vulgar-looking devil out of the way on a fool's errand the other morning, who insisted upon going with Prettyman and I, to the pump-room: men of fashion, you know, are always plagued with paltry fellows dangling after them.

Har. Hang your men of fashion! mere paltry fellows are too good company for them.

Op. Damn it, Harwood! speak more respectfully of that class of men to whom I have the honour to belong.

Har. You mistake me, Opal, it was only the men of fashion I abused; I am too well bred to

speak uncivilly, in our presence, of the other class you mentioned.

Op. I scorn your insinuation, Sir; but whatever class of men I belong to, I praise heaven I have nothing of the sour plodding book-worm about me.

Har. You do well to praise heaven for the endowments it has bestowed upon you, Opal; if all men were as thankful as you for this blessed gift of ignorance, we could not be said to live in an ungrateful generation.

Op. Talk away, laugh at your own wit as much as you please, I don't mind it. I don't trouble my head to find out bons mots of a morning.

Har. You are very right, Jack, for it would be to no purpose if you did.

Op. I speak whatever comes readiest to me; I don't study speeches for company, Harwood.

Har. I hope so, Opal; you would have a laborious life of it, indeed, if you could not speak nonsense extempore.

Op. (*drawing himself up, and walking haughtily to the other side of the stage.*) I had no business to be so familiar with him. Sir Loftus is right; a reserved manner keeps impertinent people at a distance, (*aside — Turns about, makes a very stiff bow to Harwood, and EXIT.*)

Har. (*alone.*) I am glad he is gone. What do I see? (*here Mariane, Agnes, and Miss Eston walk over the bottom of the stage attended by Sir Loftus and Opal, and EXEUNT by the opposite side. Har. looking after them.*) Alas, now! that such impudent

fellows should be so successful, whilst I stand gazing at a distance! How lightly she trips! does she not look about to me? by heaven I'll run to her! (*Runs to the bottom of the stage, and stops short.*) Oh no! I cannot do it! but see, her uncle comes this way. He look'd so kindly at her, I could not help loving him; he must be a good man; I'll make up to him, and he perhaps will join the ladies afterwards. [EXIT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *A Lodging-house. Enter ROYSTON and HUMPHRY, followed by JONATHAN, carrying a portmanteau.*

Roy. What a world of business I have got upon my hands! I must set about it immediately. Come here, Jonathan; I shall send you out in the first place.

Jon. Well, Sir.

Roy. Take the black trunk, that is left in the hall, upon your shoulder, Jonathan, and be sure you don't run against any body with it, for that might bring us into trouble. And perhaps as you go along, you may chance to meet with some of the Duke of Begall's servants, or with somebody who can tell you where his Grace lodges in this town, and you may enquire of them, without saying I desired you; you understand me, Jonathan?

Jon. O yes, your honour!

Roy. But first of all, however, if you see any decent hair-dresser's shop in your way, desire them to send somebody here for my wig; and like enough they may tell you, at the same time, where there is an honest Town-crier to be had; I'll have Phœbe's black whelp cried directly: and hark ye, Jonathan, you may say as though the dog were your own, you understand, they will expect such a devil of a reward else; and pri'thee, man! step into the corn-market, if thou canst find out the way, and enquire the price of oats.

Jon. Yes, please your honour, but am I to go trudging about to all these places with that great heavy trunk upon my shoulder?

Roy. No, numskull! did I not bid you carry it to the Inn where the London stage puts up? by the bye, you had better take it to the waggon—but first ask the coachman, what he charges for the carriage: you can take it to the waggon afterwards. I will suffer no man to impose upon me. You will remember all this distinctly now, as I have told it you, Jonathan?

Jon. (*counting to himself upon his fingers*). O yes, your honour! I'll manage it all, I warrant!

[EXIT.]

Roy. What a world of business I have upon my hands, Humphry; I am as busy as a minister of state.

Re-enter JONATHAN, scratching his head.

Jon. La your honour! I have forgot all about his Grace, and the black whelp.

Roy. Damn your muddle pate! did not I bid

you enquire where his grace lives, and if you happen to see—

Jon. Ods bodickins! I remember it every word now! and the whelp is to be called by the Town-crier, just as one would call any thing that is lost.

Roy. Yes, yes, go about it speedily. (*Exit JON.*) Now in the first place, my good Humphry, I must see after the heiress I told you of; and it is a business which requires a great deal of management too; for—

Re-enter JONATHAN, scratching his head.

Damn that dunder-headed fool! here he is again.

Jon. Your honour won't be angry now, but hang me, if I can tell whether I am to take that there trunk to the coach, or the waggon.

Roy. Take it to the coach—no, no, to the waggon—yes, yes, I should have said—pest take it! carry it where thou wilt, fool, and plague me no more about it. (*Exit JON.*) One might as well give directions to a horse-block. Now, as I was saying, Humphry, this requires a great deal of management; for if the lady don't like me, she may happen to like my son: so I must feel my way a little, before I speak directly to the purpose.

Humph. Ay, your honour is always feeling your way.

Roy. And as for the Duke, I will ply him as close as I can with solicitations in the mean time, without altogether stating my request: for

if I get the lady, George shall have the office, and if he gets the lady, I shall have the office. So we shall have two chances in our favour both ways, my good Humphry.

Humph. Belike, Sir, if we were to take but one business in hand at a time, we might come better off at the long run.

Roy. O! thou hast no head for business, Humphry: thou hast no genius for business, my good Humphry. (*smiling conceitedly.*)

Humph. Why, for certain, your honour has a marvellous deal of wit; but I don't know how it is, nothing that we take in hand ever comes to any good; and what provokes me more than all the rest, is, that the more pains we take about it, the worse it always succeeds.

Roy. Humph! we can't guard against every cross accident.

Humph. To be sure, Sir, cross accidents will happen to every body, but certes! we have more than our own share of them.

Roy. Well, don't trouble yourself about it: I have head enough to manage my own affairs, and more than my own too. Why, my lord Slumber can't even grant a new lease, nor imprison a vagabond for poaching, without my advice and direction: did I not manage all Mr. Harebrain's election for him? and, but for one of these cursed accidents or two, had brought him in for his Borough, as neatly as my glove. Nay, if his Grace and I get into good understanding together, there is no

knowing, but I may have affairs of the nation upon my hands. Ha, ha, ha! poor Humphry, thou hast no comprehension of all this: thou think'st me a very wonderful man, dost thou not?

Humph. I must own I do sometimes marvel at your honour.

Enter Mr. WITHRINGTON.

Roy. Ha! how do you do, my dear cousin? I hope I have the happiness of seeing you in good health: I am heartily rejoiced to see you, my very good Sir. (*Shaking him heartily by the hand.*)

With. I thank you, Sir, you are welcome to Bath; I did not expect the pleasure of seeing you here.

Roy. Why, my dear worthy Sir, I am a man of so much business, so toss'd about, so harass'd with a multiplicity of affairs, that, I protest, I can't tell myself one day what part of the world I shall be in the next.

With. You give yourself a great deal of trouble, Mr. Royston.

Roy. O! hang it! I never spare myself: I must work to make others work, cousin Withrington. I have got a world of new alterations going on at Royston-hall; if you would take a trip down to see them —

With. I am no great traveller, Sir.

Roy. I have plough'd up the bowling-green, and cut down the elm trees; I have built new

stables, and fill'd up the horse-pond ; I have dug up the orchard, and pull'd down the old fruit-wall, where that odd little temple used to stand.

With. And is the little temple pulled down too? pray, what has become of your Vicar's sister, Mrs. Mary? we drunk tea with her there, I remember ; is she married yet? she was a very modest-looking gentlewoman.

Roy. So you remember her too? Well, I have pull'd down every foot of it, and built a new cart-house with the bricks. — Good commodious stalls for thirty horses, cousin Withrington ; they beat Sir John Houndly's all to nothing : it is as clever, a well-constructed building as any in the country.

With. Has Sir John built a new house in the country?

Roy. No, no, the stables I say.

With. O! you are talking of the stables again.

Roy. But when I get the new addition to the mansion-house finished, that will be the grand improvement : the best carpenters' work in the country, my dear Sir, all well-season'd timber from Norway.

Humph. It is part of a disputed wreck, Sir, and if the law-suit about the right to it turns out in my master's favour, as it should do, it will be the cheapest built house in the country. O! let his honour alone for making a bargain.

With. So you have got a law-suit on your hands, Mr. Royston? I hope you are not much addicted

to this kind of amusement ; you will find it a very expensive one.

Roy. Bless you, my good Sir, I am the most peaceable creature in the world, but I will suffer no man to impose upon me.

With. (*smiling.*) But you suffer the women sometimes to do so, do you not ?

Humph. No, nor the women neither, Sir ; for it was but th' other day that he prosecuted widow Gibson, for letting her chickens feed amongst his corn, and it was given in his honour's favour, as in right it should have been.

With. (*archly.*) And who was adjudged to pay the expences of court, Mr. Humphry ?

Humph. Ay, to be sure, his honour was obliged to pay that.

With. (*archly.*) But the widow paid swingingly for it, I suppose ?

Humph. Nay 'faith, after all, they but fined her in a sixpence ; yet that always shew'd, you know, that she was in the wrong.

With. To be sure, Mr. Humphry ; and the sixpence would indemnify your master for the costs of suit.

Humph. Nay, as a body may say, he might as well have let her alone, for any great matter he made of it that way ; but it was very wrong in her, you know, Sir, to let her hens go amongst his honour's corn, when she knew very well she was too poor to make up the loss to his honour.

With. Say no more about it, my good Hum-

phry; you have vindicated your master most ably, and I have no doubts at all in regard to the propriety of his conduct.

Humph. (*very well pleased.*) Ay, thank God, I do sometimes make shift, in my poor way, to edge in a word for his honour.

Roy. (*not so well pleased.*) Thou art strangely given to prating this morning. (*to Humph.*) By the bye, cousin Withrington, I must consult you about my application to his Grace.

Humph. (*aside to Royston, pulling him by the sleeve.*) You forget to ask for the lady, Sir.

With. (*turning round.*) What did you say of his Grace?

Roy. No, no, I should — I meant — did I not say the gracious young lady your niece? I hope she is well.

With. (*smiling.*) She is very well; you shall go home with me, and visit her.

Roy. I am infinitely obliged to you, my worthy good Sir; I shall attend you with the greatest pleasure. Some ladies have no dislike to a good-looking gentleman-like man, although he may be past the bloom of his youth, cousin; however, young men do oftener carry the day, I believe: my son George is a good likely fellow; I expect him in Bath every hour. I shall have the honour of following you, my dear Sir. Remember my orders, Humphry.

[EXEUNT.]

Enter HARWOOD hastily, looking round as if he sought some one, and were disappointed.

Har. (alone.) He is gone, I have miss'd the good uncle of Agnes — what is the matter with me now, that the sound of an old man's voice should agitate me thus? did I not feel it was the sound of something which belong'd to her? in faith! I believe, if her kitten was to mew, I should hasten to hold some intercourse with it. I can stay in this cursed house no longer, and when I do go out, there is but one way these legs of mine will carry me — the alley which leads to her dwelling — Well, well, I have been but six times there to-day already; I may have a chance of seeing her at last — I'll run after the old gentleman now — what a delightful witch it is!

[*Exit hastily.*

SCENE II.

WITHRINGTON'S house. AGNES and MARIANE discovered; Mariane reading a letter, and Agnes looking earnestly and gladly in her face.

Ag. My friend Edward is well, I see; pray what does the traveller say for himself?

Mar. (putting up the letter.) You shall read it all by and by — every thing that is pleasant and kind.

Ag. Heaven prosper you both! you are happier than I am with all my fortune, Mariane; you have a sincere lover.

Mar. And so have you, Agnes: Harwood will

bear the trial: I have watch'd him closely, and I will venture my word upon him.

Ag. (taking her in her arms.) Now if thou art not deceiv'd, thou art the dearest sweet cousin on earth! *(Pausing and looking seriously.)* Ah no! it cannot be! I am but an ordinary-looking girl, as my uncle says. *(With vivacity.)* I would it were so!

Enter SERVANT.

Ser. Sir Loftus Prettyman and Mr. Opal.

Mar. I am at home. *(Exit Servant.)* I can't attend to these fools till I have put up my letter: do you receive them; I will soon return. [EXIT.

Enter SIR LOFTUS and OPAL, dress'd pretty much alike. SIR LOFTUS makes a haughty distant bow to AGNES, and OPAL makes another very like it.

Ag. Have the goodness to be seated, Sir, *(to Sir Loftus.)* Pray, Sir, *(to Opal, making a courteous motion as if she wish'd them to sit down.)* Miss Withrington will be here immediately. *(Sir Loftus makes a slight bow without speaking; Opal does the same, and both saunter about with their hats in their hands.)*

Ag. I hope you had a pleasant walk after we left you, Sir Loftus?

Sir Loft. *(looking affectedly, as if he did not understand her.)* I beg pardon — O! you were along with Miss Withrington. *(Mumbling something which is not heard.)*

Ag. (to Op.) You are fond of that walk, Mr. Opal: I think I have seen you there frequently.

Op. Ma'am, you are very — (*mumbling something which is not heard, in the same manner with Sir Loftus, but still more absurd.*) I do sometimes walk — (*mumbling again.*)

Ag. (to Sir Loft.) The country is delightful round Bath.

Sir Loft. Ma'am!

Ag. Don't you think so, Mr. Opal.

Op. 'Pon honour I never attended to it. (*A long pause; Sir Loftus and Opal strut about conceitedly. Enter Mariane, and both of them run up to her at once, with great pleasure and alacrity.*)

Sir Loft. I hope I see Miss Withrington entirely recovered from the fatigues of the morning?

Mar. Pretty well, after the fatigue of dressing too, which is a great deal worse, Sir Loftus. (*carelessly.*)

Op. For the ball, I presume?

Sir Loft. I am delighted —

Mar. (*addressing herself to Agnes, without attending to him.*) Do you know what a provoking mistake my milliner has made?

Ag. I don't know.

Sir Loft. I hope, Madam —

Mar. (to Ag.) She has made up my dress with the colour of all others I dislike.

Op. This is very provoking indeed, I would —

Mar. (*still speaking to Ag. without attending to*

them.) And she has sent home my petticoat all patch'd over with scraps of foil, like a Mayday dress for a chimney-sweeper.

Sir Loft. (*thrusting in his face near Mariane, and endeavouring to be attended to.*) A very good comparison, ha, ha!

Op. (*thrusting in his face at the other side of her.*) Very good indeed, ha, ha, ha!

Mar. (*still speaking to Agnes, who winks significantly without attending to them.*) I'll say nothing about it, but never employ her again.

Sir Loft. (*going round to her other ear, and making another attempt.*) I am delighted, Miss Withrington—

Mar. (*carelessly.*) Are you, Sir Loftus? (*To Agnes,*) I have broken my fan, pray put it by with your own, my dear Agnes! (*Exit Agnes into the adjoining room, and Sir Loftus gives Opal a significant look, upon which he retires to the bottom of the stage, and, after sauntering a little there, EXIT.*)

Sir Loft. (*seeming a little piqued.*) If you would have done me the honour to hear me, Ma'am, I should have said, I am delighted to see you dress'd, as I hope I may presume from it you intend going to the ball to-night.

Mar. Indeed I am too capricious to know whether I do or not; do you think it will be pleasant?

Sir Loft. Very pleasant, if the devotions of a thousand admirers can make it so.

Mar. O! the devotions of a thousand admirers,

are like the good will of every body ; one steady friendship is worth it all.

Sir Loft. From which may I infer, that one faithful adorer, in your eyes, outvalues all the thousand ? (*affecting to be tender.*) Ah ! so would I have Miss Withrington to believe ! and if that can be any inducement, she will find such a one there, most happy to attend her.

Mar. Will she ? I wonder who this may be : what kind of man is he, pray ?

Sir Loft. (*with a conceited simper, at the same time in a pompous manner.*) Perhaps it will not be boasting too much to say, he is a man of fashion, and not altogether insignificant in the world.

Mar. Handsome and accomplish'd too, Sir Loftus ?

Sir Loft. I must not presume, Ma'am, to boast of my accomplishments.

Mar. (*affecting a look of disappointment.*) O ! lud ! so it is yourself after all ! I have not so much penetration as I thought. (*Yawning twice very wide.*) Bless me ! what makes me yawn so ? I forgot to visit my old woman, who sells the cakes, this morning ; that must be it. (*Yawning again.*) Do you love gingerbread, Sir Loftus ? (*Sir Loftus bites his lips, and struts proudly away to the other side of the stage, whilst Agnes peeps from the closet, and makes signs of encouragement to Mariane.*)

Mar. Well, after all, I believe it will be pleasant enough to go to the ball, with such an accomplished attendant.

Sir Loft. (*taking encouragement, and smothering his pride.*) Are you so obliging, Miss Withrington ? will you permit me to have the happiness of attending you ?

Mar. If you'll promise to make it very agreeable to me : you are fond of dancing, I suppose ?

Sir Loft. I'll do any thing you desire me ; but why throw away time so precious in the rough familiar exercise of dancing ? is there not something more distinguished, more refined, in enjoying the conversation of those we love ?

Mar. In the middle of a crowd, Sir Loftus ?

Sir Loft. What is that crowd to us ? we have nothing to do but to despise it : whilst they stare upon us with vulgar admiration, we shall talk together, smile together, attend only to each other, like beings of a different order.

Mar. O ! that will be delightful ! but don't you think we may just peep slyly over our shoulder now and then, to see them admiring us ? (*Sir Loftus bites his lips again, and struts to the bottom of the stage, whilst Agnes peeps out from the closet and makes signs to Mariane.*)

Mar. (*carelessly pulling a small case from her pocket.*) Are not these handsome brilliants, Sir Loftus ?

Sir Loft. (*very much struck with the sparkling of the diamonds, but pretending not to look at them.*) Upon my word, Ma'am, I am no judge of trinkets.

Mar. They are clumsily set ; I shall give them to my cousin.

Sir Loft. (*forgetting himself.*) Why, Ma'am, do you seriously mean — 'They are of a most incomparable water !

Mar. (*archly.*) I thought you had not attended to them.

Sir Loft. (*tenderly.*) It is impossible, in the presence of Miss Withrington, to think of any thing but the cruelty with which she imposes silence on a heart that adores her.

Mar. Nay, you entirely mistake me, Sir Loftus ; I am ready to hear you with the greatest good-nature imaginable.

Sir Loft. It is a theme, perhaps, on which my tongue would too long dwell.

Mar. O ! not at all ; I have leisure and a great deal of patience too, at present ; I beg you would by no means hurry yourself.

Sir Loft. (*after a pause, looking foolish and embarrassed.*) Few words, perhaps, will better suit the energy of passion.

Mar. Just as you please, Sir Loftus ; if you chuse to say it in a few words I am very well satisfied. (*Another pause.* Sir Loftus *very much embarrassed.*)

Enter WITHRINGTON and HARWOOD : Sir Loftus *seems much relieved.*

Sir Loft. (*aside.*) Heaven be praised, they are come !

Mar. (*to With.*) I thought you were to have brought Mr. Royston with you.

With. He left us at a shop by the way, to en-

quire the price of turnip-seed ; but he will be here by-and-by, if a hundred other things do not prevent him. (*Bows to Sir Loftus ; then turns to Harwood, and speaks as if he resumed a conversation which had just been broken off, whilst Sir Loftus and Mariane retire to the bottom of the stage.*) I perfectly agree with you, Mr. Harwood, that the study and preparation requisite for your profession is not altogether a dry treasuring up of facts in the memory, as many of your young students conceive : he who pleads the cause of man before fellow-men, must know what is in the heart of man as well as in the book of records ; and what study is there in nature so noble, so interesting as this ?

Har. But the most pleasing part of our task, my good Sir, is not the least difficult. Where application only is wanting I shall not be left behind ; for I am not without ambition, though the younger son of a family by no means affluent ; and I have a widowed mother, whose hopes of seeing me respectable must not be disappointed. I assure you there is nothing — (*Listening.*)

With. Go on, Mr. Harwood, I have great pleasure in hearing you.

Har. I thought I heard a door move.

With. It is Agnes in the next room, I dare say ; she is always making a noise.

Har. In the next room !

With. But you were going to assure me — Have the goodness to proceed.

Har. I was going to say — I rather think I said — I am sure — (*Listening again.*)

With. Poo! there is nobody there.

Har. Well, I said — I think I told you — In faith, my good Sir, I will tell you honestly, I have forgot what I meant to say.

With. No matter, you will remember it again. Ha, ha, ha! it puts me in mind of a little accident which happened to myself when I was in Lincoln's-Inn. Two or three of us met one evening, to be cheerful together, and — (*Whilst Withrington begins his story, Agnes enters softly from the adjoining closet unperceived; but Harwood, on seeing her, runs eagerly up to her, leaving Withrington astonished, in the middle of his discourse.*)

Har. (to *Ag.*) Ha! after so many false alarms, you steal upon us at last like a little thief.

Ag. And I steal something very good from you too, if you lose my uncle's story by this interruption; for I know by his face he was telling one.

With. Raillery is not always well-timed, Miss Agnes Withrington.

Ag. Nay, do not be cross with us, Sir. Mr. Harwood knew it was too good to be spent upon one pair of ears, so he calls in another to partake.

With. Get along, baggage.

Ag. So I will, uncle; for I know that only means with you, that I should place myself close to your elbow.

With. Well, two or three of us young fellows were met — did I not say —

Ag. At Lincoln's-Inn. (*Withrington hesitates.*)

Har. She has named it.

With. I know well enough it was there. And if I remember well, George Buckner was one of us. (*Agnes gives a gentle hem to suppress a cough.*)

Har. (eagerly.) You was going to speak, Miss Withrington?

Ag. No, indeed, I was not.

With. Well, George Buckner and two or three more of us — We were in a very pleasant humour that night — (*Agnes, making a slight motion of her hand to fasten some pin in her dress.*)

Har. (eagerly.) Do you not want something? (*To Agnes.*)

Ag. No, I thank you, I want nothing.

With. (half amused, half peevish.) Nay, say what you please to one another, for my story is ended.

Har. My dear Sir, we are perfectly attentive.

Ag. Now, pray, uncle!

With. (to Ag.) Now pray hold thy tongue. I forgot, I must consult the Court Calendar on Royston's account. (*Goes to a table, and takes up a red book, which he turns over.*)

Ag. (to Har.) How could you do so to my uncle? I would not have interrupted him for the world.

Har. Ay, chide me well; I dearly love to be chidden.

Ag. Do not invite me to it. I am said to have a very good gift that way, and you will soon have too much of it, I believe.

Har. O no! I would come every hour to be chidden!

Ag. And take it meekly too?

Har. Nay, I would have my revenge : I should call you scolding Agnes, and little Agnes, and my little Agnes.

Ag. You forget my dignity, Mr. Harwood.

Har. Oh ! you put all dignity out of countenance ! The great Mogul himself would forget his own in your presence.

Ag. But they are going to the garden : I am resolved to be one of the party. (*As she goes to join Sir Loftus and Mariane, who open a glass door leading to the garden, Harwood goes before, walking backwards, and his face turned to her.*) You will break your pate presently, if you walk with that retrograde step, like a dancing-master giving me a lesson. Do you think I shall follow you as if you had the fiddle in your hand?

Har. Ah, Miss Withrington ! it is you who have got the fiddle, and I who must follow,

[*EXEUNT into the garden.*]

Re-enter SIR LOFTUS from the Garden, looking about for his hat.

Sir Loft. O ! here it is.

Enter OPAL.

Op. What, here alone ?

Sir Loft. She is in the garden, I shall join her immediately.

Op. All goes on well, I suppose ?

Sir Loft. Why, I don't know how it is — nobody hears us? (*Looking round.*) I don't know how it is, but she does not seem to comprehend perfectly in what light I am regarded by the world: that is to say, by that part of it which deserves to be called so.

Op. No! that is strange enough.

Sir Loft. Upon my honour, she treats me with as much careless familiarity as if I were some plain neighbour's son in the country.

Op. 'Pon honour this is very strange.

Sir Loft. I am not without hopes of succeeding; but I will confess to you, I wish she would change her manner of behaving to me. On the word of a gentleman, it is shocking! Suppose you were to give her a hint, that she may just have an idea of the respect which is paid by every well-bred person — You understand me, Opal?

Op. O! perfectly. I shall give her to know that men like us, my dear friend —

Sir Loft. (*not quite satisfied.*) I don't know — Suppose you were to leave out all mention of yourself — Your own merit could not fail to be inferred.

Op. Well, I shall do so.

Sir Loft. Let us go to the garden. [EXEUNT.

Enter MISS ESTON, speaking as she enters.

I have been all over the town, and here I am at last, quite tired to death. How do you — (*Look-*

ing round.) O la ! there is nobody here. Mr. Opal is gone too. I'll wait till they return. (*Takes up a book, then looks at herself in the glass, then takes up the book again. Yawning.*) 'Tis all about the imagination and the understanding, and I don't know what — I dare say it is good enough to read of a Sunday. (*Yawns, and lays it down.*) O la ! I wish they would come !

Enter ROYSTON, and takes MISS ESTON for MISS WITHRINGTON.

Roy. Madam, I have the honour to be your very humble servant. — I hoped to have been here sooner, but I have been so overwhelmed with a multiplicity of affairs ; and you know, Madam, when that is the case —

Est. (taking the word out of his mouth.) One is never master of one's time for a moment. I'm sure I have been all over the town this morning, looking after a hundred things, till my head has been put into such a confusion ! “ La, Ma'am ! ” said my milliner, “ do take some lavender drops, you look so pale. ” — “ Why, ” says I, “ I don't much like to take them, Mrs. Trollop, they an't always good. ”

Roy. No more they are, Ma'am, you are very right ; and if a silly fellow, I know, had taken my advice last year, and brought up the crops of lavender, he would have made —

Est. (taking the word from him again.) A very good fortune, I dare say. But people never will

take advice, which is very foolish in them, to be sure. Now I always take —

Roy. Be so good as to hear me, Ma'am.

Est. Certainly, Sir; for I always say, if they give me advice it is for my good, and why should not I take it?

Roy. (*edging in his word as fast as he can.*) And the damn'd foolish fellow too! I once saved him from being cheated in a horse; and —

Est. La! there are such cheats! a friend of mine bought a little lap-dog the other day —

Roy. But the horse, Ma'am, was —

Est. Not worth a guinea, I dare say. Why, they had the impudence to palm it on my friend—

(*Both speaking together.*)

Est. As a pretty little dog which had been bred

Roy. It was a good mettled horse, and might

E. up for a lady of quality, and when she had

R. have passed a good purchase at the money,

E. just made a cushion for it at the foot of her

R. but on looking, his fore feet— (*Stops short, and lets her go on.*)

E. own bed, she found it was all over mangy. I'm sure I would rather have a plain wholesome cat than the prettiest mangy dog in the kingdom.

Roy. Certainly, Ma'am. And I assure you the horse — for says I to the groom —

(*Both speaking together.*)

Est. O! I dare say it was — and who would

Roy. What is the matter with this pastern,
E. have suspected that a dog bred up on pur-
R. Thomas? it looks as if it were rubbed —
(*Stops short again, and looks at her with astonish-
ment as she goes on talking.*)

E. pose for a lady of quality, should be all over
so! Nasty creature! It had spots upon its back
as large as my watch. (*Taking up her watch.*) O
la! I am half an hour after my time. My man-
tua-maker is waiting for me. Good morning, Sir!

[EXIT, *hastily.*

Roy. (*looking after her.*) Clack, clack, clack,
clack! What a devil of a tongue she has got!
'Faith! George shall have her, and I'll e'en ask
the place for myself. (*Looking out.*) But there
is company in the garden: I'll go and join them.

[EXIT *to the garden.*

ACT III.

SCENE I. — Mr. WITHRINGTON'S *House.* *A
loud laughing without. Enter ROYSTON, in a
great rage.*

Roy. Ay, ay, laugh away, laugh away, Madam!
you'll weep by-and-by, mayhap. (*Pauses and
listens; laughing still heard.*) What an infernal
noise the jade makes! I wish she had a peck of
chaff in her mouth! I am sure it is wide enough
to hold it.

Enter HUMPHRY.

Humph. I have been seeking your honourever y where — Lord, Sir! I have something to tell you.

Roy. Confound your tales! don't trouble me with a parcel of nonsense.

Humph. (*staring at him, and hearing the laughing without.*) For certain, your honour, there's somebody in this house merrier than you or I.

Roy. Damn you, Sir! how do you know I am not merry? Go home, and do what I ordered you directly. If that fellow Jonathan is not in the way, I'll horse-whip him within an inch of his life. Begone, I say; why do you stand staring at me like a madman? [EXEUNT.

Enter MARIANE and AGNES, by opposite sides.

Mar. (*holding her sides.*) I shan't be able to laugh again for a month.

Ag. You have got rid of one lover, who will scarcely attempt you a second time. I have met him hurrying through the hall, and muttering to himself like a madman. It is not your refusal of his son that has so roused him.

Mar. No, no; he began his courtship in a doubtful way, as if he would recommend a gay young husband to my choice; but a sly compliment to agreeable men of a middle age, brought him soon to speak plainly for himself.

Ag. But how did you provoke him so?

Mar. I will tell you another time. It is later than I thought. (*Looking at her watch.*)

Ag. Don't go yet. How stands it with you and a certain gentleman I recommended to your notice?

Mar. O! he does not know whether I am tall or short, brown or fair, foolish or sensible, after all the pains I have taken with him; he has eyes, ears, and understanding, for nobody but you, Agnes, and I will attempt him no more. He spoke to me once with animation in his countenance, and I turned round to listen to him eagerly, but it was only to repeat to me something you had just said, which, to deal plainly with you, had not much wit in it neither. I don't know how it is, he seemed to me at first a pleasanter man than he proves to be.

Ag. Say not so, Mariane! he proves to be most admirable!

Mar. Well, be it so; he cannot prove better than I wish him to do, and I can make up my list without him. I have a love-letter from an Irish baronet in my pocket, and Opal will declare himself presently. — I thought once he meant only to plead for his friend; but I would not let him off so, for I know he is a mercenary creature. I have flattered him a little at the expence of Sir Loftus, and I hope, ere long, to see him set up for a great man upon his own bottom.

Ag. So it was only to repeat to you something that I had been saying?

Mar. Ha! you are thinking of this still. I be-

lieve, indeed, he sets down every turn of your eye in his memory, and acts it all over in secret.

Ag. Do you think so! give me your hand, my dear Mariane; you are a very good cousin to me— Marks every turn of mine eye! I am not quite such an ordinary girl as my uncle says— My complexion is as good as your own, Mariane, if it were not a little sun-burnt. (*Mariane smiles.*) Yes, smile at my vanity as you please; for what makes me vain, makes me so good-humoured too, that I will forgive you. But here comes uncle. (*Skip-ping as she goes to meet him.*) I am light as an air-ball! (*Enter Mr. Withrington.*) My dear Sir, how long you have been away from us this morning! I am delighted to see you so pleased and so happy.

With. (*with a very sour face.*) You are mistaken, young lady, I am not so pleased as you think.

Ag. O no, Sir! you are very good-humoured. Isn't he, Mariane?

With. But I say I am in a very bad humour. Get along with your foolery!

Ag. Is it really so? Let me look in your face, uncle. To be sure your brows are a little knit, and your eyes a little gloomy, but that is nothing to be called bad humour; if I could not contrive to look crabbeder than all this comes to, I would never pretend to be ill-humoured in my life. (*Mariane and Agnes take him by the hands, and begin to play with him.*)

With. No, no, young ladies, I am not in a

mood to be played with. I can't approve of every farce you please to play off in my family ; nor to have my relations affronted, and driven from my house for your entertainment.

Mar. Indeed, Sir, I treated Royston better than he deserved ; for he would not let me have time to give a civil denial, but ran on planning settlements and jointures, and a hundred things besides : I could just get in my word to stop his career with a flat refusal, as he was about to provide for our descendants of the third generation. O ! if you had seen his face then, uncle !

With. I know very well how you have treated him.

Ag. Don't be angry, Sir. What does a man like Royston care for a refusal ? he is only angry that he can't take the law of her for laughing at him.

With. Let this be as it may, I don't chuse to have my house in a perpetual bustle from morning till night, with your plots and your pastimes. There is no more order nor distinction kept up in my house, than if it were a cabin in Kamschatka, and common to a whole tribe. In every corner of it I find some visitor, or showman, or milliner's apprentice, loitering about : my best books are cast upon footstools and window-seats, and my library is littered over with work-bags ; dogs, cats, and kittens, take possession of every chair, and refuse to be disturbed : and the very beggar children go hopping before my door with their half-

eaten scraps in their hands, as if it were the entry to a workhouse.

Ag. (clapping his shoulder gently.) Now don't be impatient, my dear Sir, and every thing shall be put into such excellent order as shall delight you to behold. And as for the beggar children, if any of them dare but to set their noses near the house I'll — What shall I do with them, Sir? *(Pauses, and looks in his face, which begins to relent.)* I believe we must not be very severe with them after all. *(Both take his hands and coax him.)*

With. Come, come, off hands, and let me sit down. I am tired of this.

Ag. Yes, uncle, and here is one seat, you see, with no cat upon it. *(Withrington sits down, and Agnes takes a little stool and sits down at his feet, curling her nose as she looks up to him, and making a good-humoured face.)*

With. Well, it may be pleasant enough, girls; but allow me to say, all this playing, and laughing, and hoidening about, is not gentlewomanlike; nay, I might say, is not maidenly. A high-bred elegant woman, is a creature which man approaches with awe and respect; but nobody would think of accosting you with such impressions, any more than if you were a couple of young female tinkers.

Ag. Don't distress yourself about this, Sir; we shall get the men to bow to us, and tremble be-

fore us too, as well as e'er a hoop petticoat or long ruffles of them all.

With. Tremble before you! ha, ha, ha! (*To Agnes.*) Who would tremble before thee, dost thou think?

Ag. No despicable man, perhaps: What think you of your favourite, Harwood?

With. Poo, poo, poo! he is pleased with thee as an amusing and good-natured creature, and thou thinkest he is in love with thee, forsooth.

Ag. A good-natured creature! he shall think me a vixen and be pleased with me.

With. No, no, not quite so far gone, I believe.

Ag. I'll bet you two hundred pounds that it is so. If I win, you shall pay it to Mariane for wedding trinkets; and if you win, you may build a couple of alms-houses.

With. Well, be it so. We shall see, we shall see.

Mar. Indeed we shall see you lose your bet, uncle.

With. (*to Mar.*) Yes, baggage, I shall have your prayers against me, I know.

Enter SERVANT, and announces Mr. OPAL. Enter OPAL.

Op. (*to Mar.*) I hope I have the pleasure of seeing Miss Withrington well this morning. (*Bows distantly to Withrington, and still more so to Agnes, after the manner of Sir Loftus.*)

With. Your servant, Sir.

Mar. (to *Op.*) How did you like the ball last night? There was a gay, genteel-looking company.

Op. (with affected superiority.) Excepting Lord Saunter, and Lord Poorly, and Sir Loftus, and one or two more of us, I did not know a soul in the room.

With. There were some pretty girls there, Mr. Opal.

Op. I am very glad to hear it, 'pon honour. I did not — (*Mumbling.*)

With. (*aside.*) Affected puppy! I can't bear to look at him. [EXIT.

Mar. (*assuming a gayer air as Withrington goes out.*) You will soon have a new beau to enrich your circle, Mr. Opal, the handsome and accomplished Colonel Beaumont. He is just returned from abroad, and is now quite the fashion. (*To Agnes.*) Don't you think Mr. Opal resembles him?

Ag. O! very much indeed.

Op. (*bowing very graciously.*) Does he not resemble Sir Loftus too? I mean in his air and his manner.

Mar. O! not at all! That haughty coldness of his is quite old-fashioned now; so unlike the affable frankness so much admired in the Colonel: you have seen him, I presume?

Op. I have never had that honour.

Mar. Then you will not be displeased at the likeness we have traced when you do.

Op. (*relaxing from his dignity, and highly pleased.*) The greatest pleasure of my life, Ma'am, will be to resemble what pleases you. (*Mariane gives Agnes the wink, and she retires to the bottom of the stage.*)

Mar. You flatter me infinitely.

Op. Ah! call it not flattery, charming Miss Withrington! for now I will have the boldness to own to you frankly, I have been, since the first moment I beheld you, your most sincere, your most passionate admirer. Upon hon—(*correcting himself*) 'faith I have!

Mar. Nothing but my own want of merit can make me doubt of any thing Mr. Opal asserts upon his honour or his faith. (*Turning and walking towards the bottom of the stage, whilst Opal follows her talking in dumb show; then Agnes joins them, and they all come forward to the front.*)

Ag. (*to Mar.*) How much that turn of his head puts me in mind of the Colonel!

Mar. So it does, my Agnes. (*To Opal.*) Pray have the goodness to hold it so for a moment! There now, it is just the very thing. (*Opal holds his head in a constrained ridiculous posture, and then makes a conceited bow.*) His very manner of bowing too! one would swear it was him!

Ag. Yes, only the Colonel is more familiar, more easy in his carriage.

Op. O! Ma'am! I assure you I have formerly

— It is my natural manner to be remarkably easy
— But I — (*pauses.*)

Mar. Have never condescended to assume any other than your natural manner, I hope.

Op. O! not at all, I detest affectation; there is nothing I detest so much — But upon my soul! I can't tell how it is, I have been graver of late. I am, indeed, sometimes thoughtful.

Mar. O fy upon it! don't be so any more. It is quite old-fashioned and ridiculous now. (*To Agnes, winking significantly.*) Did you see my gloves any where about the room, cousin?

Op. I'll find them. (*Goes to look for them with great briskness. — Servant announces Miss Eston.*)

Op. Pest take her! I stared at her once in a mistake, and she has ogled and followed me ever since.

Enter MISS ESTON, running up to MARIANE and AGNES, and pretending not to see OPAL, though she cannot help looking askance at him while she speaks.

Est. O my dear creatures! you can't think how I have longed to see you. Mrs. Thomson kept me so long this morning, and you know she is an intolerable talker. (*Pretending to discover Opal.*) O! how do you do, Mr. Opal? I declare I did not observe you!

Op. (*with a distant haughty bow.*) I am obliged to you, Ma'am.

Est. I did see your figure, indeed, but I mistook it for Sir Loftus.

Op. (*correcting himself, and assuming a cheerful frank manner.*) O Ma'am ! you are very obliging to observe me at all. I believe Prettyman and I may be nearly of the same height. (*Looking at his watch.*) I am beyond my appointment, I see. Excuse me ; I must hurry away. [Exit hastily.

Est. (*looking after him with marks of disappointment.*) I am very glad he is gone. He does so haunt me, and stare at me, I am quite tired of it. The first time I ever saw him, you remember how he looked me out of countenance. I was resolved before I came not to take notice of him.

Mar. So you knew you should find him here, then ?

Est. O la ! one don't know of a morning who one may meet ; as likely him as any body else, you know. I really wonder now what crotchet he has taken into his head about me. Do you know, last night, before twilight, I peeped over the blind, and saw him walking with slow pensive steps, under my window.

Mar. Well, what happened then ?

Est. I drew in my head, you may be sure ; but a little while after, I peeped out again, and, do you know, I saw him come out of the perfumer's shop, just opposite to my dressing-room, where he had been all the while.

Mar. Very well, and what happened next ?

Est. La ! nothing more. But was it not very

odd? What should he be doing all that time in that little paltry shop? The great shop near the Circus is the place where every body buys perfumery.

Ag. No, there is nothing very odd in Mr. Opal's buying perfumes at a very paltry shop, where he might see and be seen by a very pretty lady.

Est. (*with her face brightening up.*) Do you think so? O no! you don't so?

Ag. To be sure I do. But I know what is very strange.

Est. O la, dear creature! What is it?

Ag. He bought his perfumes there before you came, when there was no such inducement. Is not that very odd? (*Eston pauses, and looks silly.*)

Enter Mr. WITHRINGTON, *but upon perceiving* ESTON, *bows and retreats again.*

Est. (*recovering herself.*) Ha! how do you do, Mr. Withrington? I have just seen your friend, Lady Fade. Poor dear soul! she says —

With. I am sorry, Ma'am, it is not in my power at present — I am in a hurry, I have an appointment. Your servant, Ma'am. [EXIT.

Est. Well, now, this is very odd! Wherever I go, I find all the men just going out to some appointment. O, I forgot to tell you, Mrs. Thomson has put a new border to her drawing-room, just like the one up stairs. Has it not a dark blue ground? (*To Mariane.*)

Mar. I'm sure I cannot tell, let us go up stairs and see. [EXEUNT.

SCENE II.

Before Mr. WITHRINGTON's House. Enter HARWOOD.

Well, here I am again, yet devil take me if I can muster up resolution enough to touch the knocker! what a fool was I to call twice this morning! for with what face can I now visit her again? The old gentleman will look strangely at me; the fine heiress her cousin will stare at me; nay, the very servants begin already to smile with impertinent significance, as I inquire with conscious foolishness, if the ladies are at home. Then Agnes herself will look so drolly at me—Ah! but she will look so pleasantly too!—'Faith! I'll e'en go. (*Goes to the door, puts his hand up to the knocker, stops short, and turns from it again. Pauses.*) What a fool am I, to stand thinking about it here. If I were but fairly in the room with her, and the first salutation over, I should not care if the devil himself made faces at me. Oh no! every body is good-humoured, every thing is happy that is near her! the kitten who plays by her side takes hold of her gown unchidden. How pleasant it is to love what is so blessed! I should hate the fairest woman on earth if she were not of a sweet temper. Come, come; every thing favours me here, but my own foolish fancies. (*As he*

goes to the door again, it opens, and enters from the house, Betty, crying, with a bundle in her hand.)

Bet. O dear me ! O dear me !

Har. What is the matter with you, my good girl ?

Bet. I'm sure it was not my fault, and she has abused me worser than a heathen.

Har. That is hard indeed.

Bet. Indeed it is, Sir ; and all for a little nasty essence-bottle, which was little better than a genteel kind of a stink at the best ; and I am sure I did but take out the stopper to smell to it, when it came to pieces in my hand like an egg-shell. If bottles will break, how can I help it ? but la ! Sir, there is no speaking reason to my mistress ; she is as furious and as ill-tempered as a dragon.

Har. Don't distress yourself ; Miss Agnes Withrington will make amends to you for the severity of your mistress.

Bet. She truly ! it is she herself who is my mistress, and she has abused me — O dear me ! — If it had been Miss Withrington, she would not have said a word to me ; but Miss Agnes is so cross, and so ill-natured, there is no living in the house with her.

Har. Girl, you are beside yourself !

Bet. No, Sir, God be praised ! but she is beside herself, I believe. Does she think I am going to live in her service to be call'd names so, and compared to a blackamoor too ? If I had been waiting-maid to the queen, she would not have compared

me to a blackamoor, and will I take such usage from her?—what do I care for her cast gowns?

Har. Well, but she is liberal to you?

Bet. She liberal! she'll keep every thing that is worth keeping to herself, I warrant; and Lord pity those who are bound to live with her! I'll seek out a new place for myself, and let the devil, if he will, wait upon her next, in the shape of a blackamoor: they will be fit company for one another; and if he gets the better of her at scolding, he is a better devil than I take him for. And I am sure, Sir, if you were to see her—

Har. Get along! get along! you are too passionate yourself, to be credited.

Bet. I know what I know; I don't care what nobody says, no more I do; I know who to complain to. [Exit, grumbling.]

Har. (*alone.*) What a malicious toad it is! I dare say now, she has done something very provoking. I cannot bear these pert chamber-maids; the very sight of them is offensive to me.

Enter JONATHAN.

Jon. Good evening to your honour; can you tell me if Mr. Withrington be at home? for as how, my master has sent me with a message to him.

Har. (*impatiently.*) Go to the house and inquire; I know nothing about it. (*Jonathan goes to the house.*)

Har. (*alone, after musing some time.*) That girl has put me out of all heart though, with her

cursed stories. — No, no, it cannot be — it is impossible !

Re-enter JONATHAN from the house, scratching his head, and looking behind him.

Jon. 'Faith there is hot work going on amongst them ! thank heaven I am out again.

Har. What do you mean ?

Jon. 'Faith ! that little lady, in that there house, is the best hand at a scold, saving Mary Macmurrock, my wife's mother, that ever my two blessed eyes looked upon. Lord, Sir, (*going nearer him*) her tongue goes ting, ting, ting, as shrill as the bell of any pieman ; and then, Sir, (*going nearer him*) her two eyes look out of her head, as though they were a couple of glow-worms ! and then, Sir, he, he, he ! (*Laughing and going close up to him.*) She claps her little hands so, as if —

Har. Shut your fool's mouth and be damn'd to you ! (*Kicks Jonathan off the stage in a violent passion ; then leans his back to a tree, and seems thoughtful for some time and very much troubled.*)

Enter AGNES from the house, with a stormy look on her face.

Ag. So you are still loitering here, Harwood ? you have been very much amused, I suppose, with the conversation of those good folks you have talked with.

Har. No, not much amused, Madam, though

somewhat astonished, I own ; too much astonished, indeed, to give it any credit.

Ag. O ! it is true though ; I have been very cross with the girl, and very cross with every body ; and if you don't clear up that dismal face of yours, I shall be cross with you too : what could possess you to stay so long under the chestnut-tree, a little while ago, always appearing as if you were coming to the house, and always turning back again ?

Har. (eagerly.) And is it possible, you were then looking at me, and observing my motions ?

Ag. Indeed I was just going to open my window and beckon to you, when that creature broke my phial of sweet essence, and put me quite out of temper.

Har. Hang the stupid jade ! I could —

Ag. So you are angry too ? O ! well done ! we are fit company for one another. Come along with me, come, come ! *(impatently. As she turns to go, something catches hold of her gown.)* What is this ? confounded thing ! *(Pulls away her gown in a passion, and tears it.)*

Har. (aside.) Witch that she is ! she should be beaten for her humours. I will not go with her.

Ag. (looking behind.) So you won't go in with me ? good evening to you then : we did want a fourth person to make up a party with us ; but since you don't like it, we shall send to Sir Loftus, or Opal, or Sir Ulock O'Grady, or some other good creature ; I dare say Sir Loftus will come.

Har. (half aside.) Cursed coxcomb ! If he sets his snout within the door, I'll pistol him.

Ag. (overhearing him.) Ha ! well said ! you will make the best company in the world. Come along, come along ! *(He follows her half unwillingly.)* Why don't you offer your arm here ? don't you see how rough it is ? *(He offers his arm.)* Poo, not that arm ! *(Offers her the other.)* Poo, not so neither, on t'other side of me.

Har. What a humoursome creature you are ! I have offer'd you two arms, and neither of them will do ; do you think I have a third to offer you ?

Ag. You are a simpleton, or you would have half a dozen at my service.

[*EXEUNT into the house.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I. — *HARWOOD's Lodgings. He is discovered walking about with an irregular disturbed step, his hair and dress all neglected and in disorder ; he comes forward to the front of the stage.*

Har. I have neither had peace nor sleep since I beheld her ; O ! that I had never known her ! or known her only such as my first fond fancy conceived her ! — I would my friend were come ; I will open my heart to him : he perhaps will speak comfort to me ; for surely that temper must be violent

indeed, which generous affection cannot subdue ; and she must be extravagant beyond all bounds of nature, who would ruin the fond husband who toils for her. No, no, nature makes not such, but when she sets her scowling mark upon their forehead to warn us from our ruin. (*Pauses, walks up and down, then comes forward again.*) Insipid constitutional good nature is a tiresome thing: passion subdued by reason is worth a score of it — and passion subdued by love ! — O ! that were better still ! — yesterday, as I entered her door, I heard her name me to her cousin, with so much gentle softness in her voice, I blest her as she spoke ! — Ah ! if this were so, all might still be well. Who would not struggle with the world for such a creature as this ? — Ay, and I must struggle — O ! that this head of mine would give over thinking but for one half hour ? (*Rings the bell.*)

Enter THOMAS.

What brings you here, Thomas ?

Thom. Your bell rung, Sir.

Har. Well, well, I did want something, but I have forgot it. Bring me a glass of water. (*Exit Thomas. Harwood sits down by a small writing-table, and rests his head upon his hand. Re-enter Thomas with the water.*) You have made good haste, Thomas.

Thom. I did make good haste, Sir, lest you should be impatient with me.

Har. I am sometimes impatient with you, then ?

I fear indeed I have been too often so of late ; but you must not mind it, Thomas ; I mean you no unkindness.

Thom. Lord love you, Sir, I know that very well ! a young gentleman who takes an old man into his service, because other gentlemen do not think him quick enough, nor smart enough for them, as your honour has taken me, can never mean to show him any unkindness : I know it well enough ; I am only uneasy because I fear you are not so well of late.

Har. I thank you, Thomas, I am not very well — I am notill neither ; I shall be better. (*Pauses.*) I think I have heard you say you were a soldier in your youth ?

Thom. Yes, Sir.

Har. And you had a wife too, a woman of fiery mettle, to bear about your knapsack ?

Thom. Yes, Sir, my little stout spirity Jane ; sbe had a devil of a temper, to be sure.

Har. Yet you loved her notwithstanding ?

Thom. Yes, to be sure I did, as it were, bear her some kindness.

Har. I'll be sworn you did ! — and you would have been very sorry to have parted with her.

Thom. Why death parts the best of friends, Sir ; we lived but four years together.

Har. And so your little spirity Jane was taken so soon away from you ? Give me thy hand, my good Thomas. (*Takes his hand and presses it.*)

Thom. (*perceiving tears in his eyes.*) Lord Sir !

don't be so distressed about it : she did die, to be sure ; but truly, between you and I, although I did make a kind of whimpering at the first, I was not ill pleased afterwards to be rid of her ; for, truly, Sir, a man who has got an ill-tempered wife, has but a dog's life of it at the best. — Will you have your glass of water, Sir ?

Har. (looking at him with dissatisfaction.) No, no, take it away ; I have told you a hundred times not to bring me that chalky water from the courtyard. *(Turns away from him.)*

Enter Colonel HARDY. — HARWOOD makes signs to Thomas, and he goes out.

Har. My dear Colonel, this is kind : I am very glad to see you.

Col. It is so seldom that a young fellow has any inclination for the company of an old man, that I should feel myself vain of the summons you have sent me, were I not afraid, from this dishabille, my dear Harwood, that you are indisposed.

Har. You are very good ; I am not indisposed. I have indeed been anxious — I rested indifferently last night — I hope I see you well.

Col. Very well, as you may guess from the speed I have made in coming to you. These legs do not always carry me so fast. But you have something particular to say to me.

Har. I am very sensible of your friendship — Pray, Colonel, be seated. — *(They sit down — a long pause — Colonel Hardy, like one expecting to hear*

something ; Harwood, like one who knows not how to begin.) — There are moments in a man's life, Colonel Hardy, when the advice of a friend is of the greatest value ; particularly one, who has also been his father's friend.

Col. My heart very warmly claims both those relations to you, Harwood ; and I shall be happy to advise you as well as I am able.

Har. (after another pause.) I am about to commence a laborious profession — the mind is naturally anxious — (*Pauses.*)

Col. But you are too capable of exercising well that profession, to suffer much uneasiness.

Har. Many a man with talents superior to mine has sunk beneath the burden.

Col. And many a man, with talents vastly inferior to yours, has borne it up with credit.

Har. Ah ! what avails the head with an estranged heart ?

Col. You are disgusted then with your profession, and have, perhaps, conceived more favourably of mine ? I am sorry for it : I hoped to see you make a figure at the bar ; and your mother has long set her heart upon it.

Har. (with energy.) O no ! she must not — she shall not be disappointed ! — Pardon me, my expressions have gone somewhat wide of my meaning — I meant to have consulted you in regard to other difficulties —

Col. And pardon me likewise for interrupting you ; but it appears to me, that an unlearned

soldier is not a person to be consulted in these matters.

Har. It was not altogether of these matters I meant to speak — But, perhaps, we had better put it off for the present.

Col. No, no.

Har. Perhaps we had better walk out a little way : we may talk with less restraint as we go.

Col. No, no, there are a thousand impertinent people about. Sit down again, and let me hear every thing you wish to say.

Har. (*pausing, hesitating, and much embarrassed.*) There are certain attachments in which a man's heart may be so deeply interested — I would say so very — or rather I should say so strangely engaged, that — (*hesitates and pauses.*)

Col. O, here it is ! I understand it now. But pray don't be so foolish about it, Harwood ! You are in love ?

Har. (*appearing relieved.*) I thank your quickness, my dear Colonel ; I fear it is somewhat so with me.

Col. And whence your fear ? Not from the lady's cruelty ?

Har. No, there is another bar in my way, which does, perhaps, too much depress my hopes of happiness.

Col. You have not been prudent enough to fall in love with an heiress ?

Har. No, my dear Sir, I have not.

Col. That is a great mistake, to be sure, Har-

wood ; yet many a man has not advanced the less rapidly in his profession, for having had a portionless wife to begin the world with. It is a spur to industry.

Har. (looking pleased at him.) Such sentiments are what I expected from Colonel Hardy ; and, were it not for female failings, there would be little risk in following them. — I don't know how to express it — I am perhaps too delicate in these matters — We ought not to expect a faultless woman.

Col. No, surely ; and, if such a woman were to be found, she would be no fit companion for us.

Har. (getting up, and pressing the Colonel's hand between his.) My dearest friend ! your liberality and candour delight me ! — I do indeed believe that many a man has lived very happily with a woman far from being faultless : and, after all, where is the great injury he sustains, if she should be a little violent and unreasonable ?

Col. (starting up from his seat.) Nay, heaven defend us from a violent woman ; for that is the devil himself ! (*Seeing Harwood's countenance change.*) — What is the matter with you, Harwood ? She is not ill-tempered, I hope ?

Har. (hesitating.) Not — not absolutely so — She is of a very quick and lively disposition, and is apt to be too hasty and unguarded in her emotions. — I do not, perhaps, make myself completely understood.

Col. O, I understand you perfectly. — I have

known ladies of this lively disposition, very hasty and unguarded too in their demands upon a man's pocket as well as his patience; but she may be of a prudent and economical turn. Is it so, Harwood?

Har. (throwing himself into a chair very much distressed.) I do not say it is, Colonel.

Col. (putting his hand kindly upon his shoulder.) I am sorry to distress you so much, my dear friend, yet it must be so. I see how it is with you: pardon the freedom of friendship, but indeed an expensive and violent-temper'd woman is not to be thought of: he who marries such a one forfeits all peace and happiness. Pluck up some noble courage, and renounce this unfortunate connexion.

Har. (starting up.) Renounce it, Colonel Hardy? Is it from you I receive so hard, so unfeeling a request, who has suffered so much yourself from the remembrance of an early attachment? I thought to have been pitied by you.

Col. I was early chagrined with the want of promotion, and disappointed in my schemes of ambition, which gave my countenance something of a melancholy cast, I believe, and the ladies have been kind enough to attribute it to the effects of hopeless love; but how could you be such a ninny, my dear Harwood?

Har. I am sorry, Sir, we have understood one another so imperfectly.

Col. Nay, nay, my young friend, do not carry

yourself so distantly with me. You have sought a love-lorn companion, and you have found a plain spoken friend. I am sorry to give you pain : deal more openly with me : when I know who this bewitching creature is, I shall, perhaps, judge more favourably of your passion.

Har. It is Miss Agnes Withrington.

Col. Cousin to Miss Withrington the heiress ?

Har. Yes, it is she. What have I said to amaze you ?

Col. You amaze me, indeed ! — That little — forgive me if I were almost to say, — plain-looking girl ! Friendship would sympathize in your feelings ; but, pardon me, Harwood, you have lost your wits.

Har. I believe I have, Colonel, which must plead my pardon, likewise, for expecting this friendship from you.

Col. You distress me.

Har. I distress myself still more, by suffering so long the pain of this conversation.

Col. Let us end it, then, as soon as you please. When you are in a humour to listen to reason, I shall be happy to have the honour of seeing you.

Har. When I am in that humour, Sir, I will not balk it so much as to intrude upon your time.

Col. Let me see you, then, when you are not in that humour, and I shall more frequently have the pleasure of your company. (*Both bow coldly.*)

[EXIT Colonel Hardy.]

Har. (alone.) What a fool was I to send for this man! — A little plain-looking girl! What do the people mean? They will drive me mad amongst them. Why does not the little witch wear high heels to her shoes, and stick a plume of feathers in her cap? Oh! they will drive me distracted! [EXIT.

SCENE II.

MR. WITHRINGTON'S House. AGNES discovered embroidering at a small table, HARWOOD standing by her, and hanging fondly over her as she works.

Har. How pretty it is! Now you put a little purple on the side of the flower.

Ag. Yes, a very little shade.

Har. And now a little brown upon that.

Ag. Even so.

Har. And thus you work up and down, with that tiny needle of yours, till the whole flower is completed. (*Pauses, still looking at her working.*) Why, Agnes, you little witch! you're doing that leaf wrong.

Ag. You may pick it out then, and do it better for me. I'm sure you have been idle enough all the morning, it is time you were employed about something.

Har. And so I will. (*sitting down by her, and taking hold of the work.*)

Ag. (*covering the flower with her hand.*) O! no, no!

Har. Take away that little perverse hand, and let me begin. (*Putting his hand upon hers.*)

Ag. What a good for nothing creature you are ! you can do nothing yourself, and you will suffer nobody else to do any thing. I should have had the whole pattern finished before now, if you had not loitered over my chair so long.

Har. So you can't work when I look over you ! Then I have some influence upon you ? O you sly girl ! you are caught in your own words at last.

Ag. Indeed, Harwood, I wish you would go home again to your law-books and your precedent-hunting ; you have mispent a great deal of time here already.

Har. Is it not better to be with you in reality than only in imagination ? Ah ! Agnes ! you little know what my home studies are. — Law, said you ! how can I think of law, when your countenance looks upon me from every black lettered page that I turn ? when your figure fills the empty seat by my side, and your voice speaks to me in the very mid-day stillness of my chamber ? Ah ! my sweet Agnes ! you will not believe what a foolish fellow I have been since I first saw you.

Ag. Nay, Harwood, I am not at all incredulous of the fact ; it is only the cause of it which I doubt.

Har. Saucy girl ! I must surely be revenged upon you for all this.

Ag. I am tired of this work. (*Getting up.*)

Har. O! do not give over.—Let me do something for you — Let me thread your needle for you — I can thread one most nobly.

Ag. There then. (*Gives him a needle and silk.*)

Har. (*pretending to scratch her hand with it.*) So ought you to be punished. (*Threads it awkwardly.*)

Ag. Ay, nobly done, indeed! but I shall work no more to-day.

Har. You must work up my needleful.

Ag. I am to work a fool's cap in the corner by-and-by; I shall keep your needleful for that. I am going to walk in the garden.

Har. And so am I.

Ag. You are?

Har. Yes, I am. Go where you will, Agnes, to the garden or the field, the city or the desert, by sea or by land, I must e'en go too. I will never be where you are not, but when to be where you are is impossible.

Ag. There will be no getting rid of you at this rate, unless some witch will have pity upon me, and carry me up in the air upon her broomstick.

Har. There I will not pretend to follow you; but as long as you remain upon the earth, Agnes, I cannot find in my heart to budge an inch from your side.

Ag. You are a madman!

Har. You are a sorceress!

Ag. You are an idler!

Har. You are a little mouse!

Ag. Come, come, get your hat then, and let us go. (*Aside, while he goes to the bottom of the stage for his hat.*) Bless me! I have forgot to be ill-humour'd all this time. [EXIT, *hastily*.

Har. (*coming forward.*) Gone for her cloke, I suppose. How delightful she is! how pleasant every change of her countenance! How happy must his life be, spent even in cares and toil, whose leisure hours are cheered with such a creature as this.

Ag. (*without, in an angry voice.*) Don't tell me so; I know very well how it is, and you shall smart for it too, you lazy, careless, impudent fellow! And, besides all this, how dare you use my kitten so?

Har. (*who listened with a rueful face.*) Well, now, but this is humanity: she will not have a creature ill used. — I wish she would speak more gently though.

Ag. (*entering.*) Troublesome, provoking, careless fellow!

Har. It is very provoking in him to use the poor kitten ill.

Ag. So it is; but it is more provoking still to mislay my clogs, as he does.

Enter Servant with clogs.

Ser. Here they are, Madam.

Ag. Bring them here I say? (*looks at them.*) These are Miss Withrington's clogs, you block-head! (*Throws them to the other side of the stage in*

a passion.) I must go without them, I find. (*To Harwood.*) What are you musing about? If you don't chuse to go with me, good morning.

Har. (sighing deeply.) Ah, Agnes! you know too well that I cannot stay behind you. [EXEUNT.]

SCENE III.

MISS WITHRINGTON'S Dressing-room. *Enter* MARIANE, *who turns back again towards the door, and calls to* AGNES *without.*

Mar. Agnes, cousin Agnes! where are you going?

Ag. (without.) I am returning to Miss Eston, whom I have left in the parlour, talking to the dog.

Mar. Well, let her talk to the dog a little longer, and let me talk to you.

Enter AGNES.

I have set Betty to watch at the higher windows to give notice of Sir Loftus's approach, that we may put ourselves in order to receive him; for I am resolved to have one bout more with him, and discharge him for good: I am quite tired of him now.

Ag. Do you expect him.

Mar. I am pretty sure he will come about this time, and I must be prepared for him. I have a good mind to tell him at once, I despise him, and that will be a plain, easy way of finishing the business.

Ag. No, no, my sweet Mariane! we must send him off with eclat. You have played your part

very well hitherto ; keep it up but for the last time, and let Miss Eston and I go into the closet and enjoy it.

Mar. Well then, do so : I shall please you for this once.

Enter BETTY, in haste.

Bet. (to Mar.) Sir Loftus is just coming up the side path, Madam, and he'll be at the door immediately.

Ag. I'll run and bring Eston directly. [EXIT.

Mar. (looking at the door of the closet.) Yes, it is very thin : they will hear well, and see through the key-hole.

Re-enter AGNES with Miss ESTON, in a great hurry.

Est. La ! I have torn my gown in my haste.

Ag. Come along, come along !

Est. It is not so bad a tear though as Mrs. Thomson got the —

Ag. Come, come, we must not stay here. (*Pushes Eston into the closet and follows. Mariane and Betty place a table with books and a chair near the front of the stage.*)

Est. (looking from the closet.) La ! Mariane, how I long to hear you and him begin. I shall be so delighted !

Mar. For heaven's sake shut the door ! he will be here immediately. (*Shuts the door upon her, and continues to set the room in order.*)

Est. (looking out again.) La ! Mariane, do you know how many yards of point Lady Squat has

got round her new — (*Agnes from behind, claps her hand on Eston's mouth, and draws her into the closet. — Mariane sets herself by the table, pretending to read. EXIT Betty, and enter Sir LOFTUS, a servant announcing him.*)

Sir Loft. You are very studious this morning, Miss Withrington.

Mar. (*carelessly.*) Ha! how do you do?

Sir Loft. You have been well amus'd, I hope?

Mar. So, so. I must put in a mark here, and not lose my place. (*Looking on the table.*) There is no paper — O, there is some on the other table: pray do fetch it me! (*Pointing to a table at the bottom of the stage.*) I am very lazy. (*Sits down again indolently.*)

Sir Loft. (*fetching the paper, and presenting it with a condescending yet self-important air.*) I have the honour to obey you, Ma'am.

Mar. I thank you; you are a very serviceable creature, I am sure.

Sir Loft. (*drawing himself up proudly, but immediately correcting himself.*) I am always happy to serve Miss Withrington.

Mar. O! I know very well the obliging turn of your disposition. (*Tosses her arm upon the table and throws down a book.*) I am very stupid this morning. (*Sir Loftus picks up the book, and gives it to her rather sulkily; and she in receiving it drops an ivory ball under the table.*) Bless me! what is the matter with all these things? pray lift it for me, good Sir Loftus! I believe you must

creep under the table for it though. (*He stoops under the table with a very bad grace, and she slyly gives it a touch with her foot, which makes it run to the other side of the stage.*) Nay, you must go farther off for it now. I am very troublesome.

Sir Loft. (*goes after it rather unwillingly, and presenting it to her with still a worse grace,*) Madam, this is more honour than I — (*mumbling.*)

Mar. O, no ! Sir Loftus, it is only you that are too good. (*Lolling carelessly in her chair.*) It is so comfortable to have such a good creature by one ! your fine fashionable men are admired to be sure, but I don't know how, I feel always restrained in their company. With a good obliging creature like you now, I can be quite at my ease ; I can just desire you to do any thing.

Sir Loft. Upon my honour, Madam, you flatter me very much indeed. Upon my honour, I must say, I am rather at a loss to conceive how I have merited these commendations.

Mar. O ! Sir Loftus, you are too humble, too diffident of yourself. I know very well the obliging turn of your disposition to every body.

Sir Loft. (*aside.*) Damn it ! is she an idiot ? (*aloud.*) Your good opinion, Madam, does me a great deal of honour, but I assure you, Ma'am, it is more than I deserve. I have great pleasure in serving Miss Withrington ; — to be at the service of every body is an extent of benevolence I by no means pretend to.

Mar. Now why are you so diffident, Sir Loftus ?

Did not old Mrs. Mumblecake tell me the other day, how you ran nine times to the apothecary's to fetch green salve to rub her monkey's tail?

Sir Loft. She told you a damned lie then! (*Biting his lip, and walking up and down with hasty strides.*) Damn it! this is beyond all bearing! I run nine times to the apothecary's to fetch green salve for her monkey's tail! If the cursed hag says so again, I'll bury her alive!

Mar. Nay, don't be angry about it. I'm sure I thought it very good in you, and I said so to every body.

Sir Loft. You have been obliging enough to tell it to all the world too?

Mar. And why should I not have the pleasure of praising you?

Sir Loft. Hell and the devil! (*Turning on his heel, and striding up and down, and muttering as he goes, whilst she sits carelessly with her arms crossed.*)

Mar. My good Sir Loftus, you will tire yourself. Had you not better be seated?

Sir Loft. (*endeavouring to compose himself.*) The influence you have over me, Ma'am, gets the better of every thing. I would not have you mistake my character, however; if love engages me in your service, you ought so to receive it. I have been less profuse of these attentions to women of the very first rank and fashion; I might therefore have hoped that you would lend a more favourable ear to my passion.

Mar. Indeed you wrong me. You don't know

how favourably my ear may be disposed : sit down here and tell me all about it. (*Sir Loftus revolts again at her familiarity, but stifles his pride, and sits down by her.*)

Sir Loft. Permit me to say, Madam, that it is time we should come to an explanation of each other's sentiments.

Mar. Whenever you please, Sir.

Sir Loft. (*bowing.*) I hope then, I may be allowed to presume, that my particular attentions to you, pardon me, Ma'am, have not been altogether disagreeable to you.

Mar. O! not at all, Sir Loftus.

Sir Loft. (*bowing again.*) I will presume then still farther, Ma'am, and declare to you, that from the very day which gave birth to my passion, I have not ceased to think of you with the most ardent tenderness.

Mar. La ! Sir Loftus, was it not of a Wednesday ?

Sir Loft. (*fretted.*) Upon my word I am not so very accurate : it might be Wednesday, or Friday, or any day.

Mar. Of a Friday, do you think ? it runs strangely in my head that we saw one another first of a Wednesday.

Sir Loft. (*very much fretted.*) I say, Ma'am, the day which gave birth to my love —

Mar. O! very true ! you might see me first of a Wednesday, and yet not fall in love with me till the Friday. (*Sir Loftus starts up in a passion, and*

strides up and down. — Mariane rising from her seat carelessly.) I wonder where William has put the nuts I bought for Miss Eston's squirrel. I think I hear a mouse in the wainscot. (*Goes to the bottom of the room, and opens a small cabinet, whilst Sir Loftus comes forward to the front.*)

Sir Loft. (aside.) Damn her freaks! I wish the devil had the wooing of her. (*Pauses.*) I must not lose her for a trifle though; but when she is once secured, I'll be revenged! I'll vex her! I'll drive the spirit out of her! (*Aloud, as she comes forward.*) My passion for you, Miss Withrington, is too generous and disinterested to merit this indifference.

Mar. I'm glad they have not eat the nuts though.

Sir Loft. (aside.) Curse her and her nuts! I'll tame her! (*aloud.*) My sentiments for you, Ma'am, are of so delicate and tender a nature, they do indeed deserve your indulgence. Tell me, then, can the most disinterested, the most fervent love, make any impression on your heart? I can no longer exist in this state of anxiety! at your feet let me implore you — (*Seems about to kneel, but rather unwillingly, as if he wished to be prevented.*)

Mar. Pray, Sir Loftus, don't kneel there! my maid has spilt oil on the floor.

Sir Loft. Since you will not permit me to have the pleasure of kneeling at —

Mar. Nay, I will not deprive you of the plea-

sure — There is no oil spilt here. (*Pointing to a part of the floor very near the closet door.*)

Sir Loft. I see it would be disagreeable to you.

Mar. I see very well you are not inclined to condescend so far.

Sir Loft. (*kneeling directly.*) Believe me, Madam, the pride, the pleasure of my life, is to be devoted to the most adorable — (*Mariane gives a significant cough, and Agnes and Eston burst from the closet: the door opening on the outside, comes against Sir Loftus as he kneels, and lays him sprawling on the floor.*)

Ag. Est. and Mar. (*speaking together.*) O Sir Loftus! poor Sir Loftus! (*All coming about him, pretending to assist him to get up.*)

Sir Loft. Damn their bawling! they will bring the whole family here!

Enter Mr. WITHRINGTON and OPAL: Sir Loftus, mad with rage, makes a desperate effort, and gets upon his legs. Opal stands laughing at him without any ceremony, whilst he bites his lips, and draws himself up haughtily.

Mar. (*to Sir Loft.*) I'm afraid you have hurt yourself?

Sir Loft. (*shortly.*) No, Ma'am.

Ag. Hav'nt you rubbed the skin off your shins, Sir Loftus?

Sir Loft. No, Ma'am.

Ag. I am sure he has hurt his nose, but he is ashamed to own it.

Sir Loft. Neither shin nor nose ! Devil take it !

With. Get along, girls, and don't torment this poor man any longer. I am afraid, Sir Loftus, the young gipsies have been making a fool of you.

Sir Loft. Sir, it is neither in your power nor theirs to make a fool of me.

Op. Ha, ha, ha, ha ! 'Faith, Prettyman, you must forgive me ! ha, ha, ha, ha ! I never thought in my life to have caught you at such low prostrations. But don't be so angry, though you do make a confounded silly figure, it must be confessed. Ha, ha, ha, ha !

Sir Loft. (to Op.) Sir, your impertinence and yourself are equally contemptible : and I desire you would no longer take the trouble of intruding yourself into my company, nor of affronting me, as you have hitherto done, with your awkward imitation of my figure and address.

Op. What the devil do you mean ? I imitate your figure and address ! I scorn to — I will not deny that I may have insensibly acquired a little of them both, for — for — (*Hesitating.*)

Ag. For he has observed people laughing at him of late.

Sir Loft. (turning on his heel.) He is beneath my resentment.

Mar. Be not so angry, good Sir Loftus ! let us end this business for the present ; and when I am at leisure to hear the remainder of your declar-

ations, which have been so unfortunately interrupted, I'll send and let you know.

Sir Loft. No, 'faith, Madam! you have heard the last words I shall ever say to you upon the subject. A large fortune may make amends for an ordinary person, Madam, but not for vulgarity and impertinence. Good morning! (*Breaks from them, and EXIT, leaving them laughing provokingly behind him.*)

With. (*shaking his head.*) This is too bad, this is too bad, young ladies! I am ashamed to have all this rioting and absurdity going on in my house.

Ag. Come away, uncle, and see him go down the back walk, from the parlour windows. I'll warrant you he'll stride it away most nobly. (*Withrington follows, shrugging up his shoulders.*)

[EXEUNT.]

ACT V.

SCENE I. — Mr. WITHRINGTON's Library. Mr.

WITHRINGTON *discovered seated by a table.*

With. Who waits there? (*Enter SERVANT.*) Tell Miss Agnes Withrington I wish to see her. [*Exit SERVANT.*] What an absurd fellow this Harwood is, to be so completely bewitched with such a girl as Agnes! If she were like the women I

remember, there would indeed be some—(Agnes entering softly behind him, gives him a tap on the shoulder.)

Ag. Well, uncle, what are you grumbling about? Have you lost your wager? Harwood has just left you, I hear.

With. I believe you may buy those trinkum trankum ornaments for Mariane whenever you please.

Ag. Pray look not so ungraciously upon the matter! But you can't forgive him, I suppose, for being such a ninny as to fall in love with a little ordinary girl, eh?

With. And so he is a ninny, and a fool, and a very silly fellow.

Ag. Do tell me what he has been saying to you.

With. Why, he confesses thou art ill-tempered, that thou art freakish, that thou art extravagant; and that of all the friends he has spoken with upon the subject, there is not one who will allow thee beauty enough to make a good-looking dairy-maid.

Ag. Did he say so!

With. Why, something nearly equivalent to it, Agnes. Yet, notwithstanding all this, there is something about thee, so unaccountably delightful to him, that, poor as thou art, he will give up the fair hopes of opulence, and the pleasures of freedom, to watch for thee, bear with thee, drudge for thee, if thou wilt have the condescen-

sion, in return, to plague and torment him for life.

Ag. Foolish enough indeed! yet heaven bless him for it! What a fortunate woman am I! I sought a disinterested lover, and I have found a most wonderful one.

With. I dare say you think yourself very fortunate.

Ag. And don't you, likewise, my good Sir? but you seem displeased at it.

With. You guess rightly enough: I must speak without disguise, Agnes; I am not pleased.

Ag. Ah! his want of fortune —

With. Poo! you know very well I despise all mercenary balancing of property. It is not that which disturbs me. To be the disinterested choice of a worthy man is what every woman, who means to marry at all, would be ambitious of; and a point in regard to her marriage, which a woman of fortune would be unwilling to leave doubtful. But there are men whose passions are of such a violent overbearing nature, that love in them, may be considered as a disease of the mind; and the object of it claims no more perfection or pre-eminence amongst women, than chalk, lime, or oatmeal do amongst dainties, because some diseased stomachs do prefer them to all things. Such men as these we sometimes see attach themselves even to ugliness and infamy, in defiance of honour and decency. With such men as these, women of sense and refinement can never be happy; nay,

to be willingly the object of their love is respectable. (*Pauses.*) But you don't care for all this, I suppose? It does well enough for an old uncle to perplex himself with these niceties : it is you yourself the dear man happens to love, and none of those naughty women I have been talking of, so all is very right. (*Pauses, and she seems thoughtful.*)

Ag. (*assuming a grave and more dignified air.*) No, Sir, you injure me : prove that his love for me is stronger than his love of virtue, and I will—

With. What will you do, Agnes?

Ag. I will give him up for ever.

With. Ay, there spoke a brave girl! you deserve the best husband in Christendom for this.

Ag. Nay, if Harwood endures not the test, I will indeed renounce him, but no other man shall ever fill his place.

With. Well, well, we shall see, we shall see. (*Walks up and down. She is thoughtful.*) You are very thoughtful, Agnes! I fear I have distressed you.

Ag. You have distressed me, yet I thank you for it. I have been too presumptuous, I have ventured farther than I ought. Since it is so, I will not shrink from the trial. (*Pauses.*) Don't you think he will go through it honourably?

With. (*shaking his head.*) Indeed I know not—I hope he will.

Ag. You hope? I thank you for that word, my

dear Sir ! I hope he will too. (*She remains thoughtful : he takes a turn or two across the stage.*)

With. (*clapping her shoulder affectionately.*)
What are you thinking of, niece ?

Ag. How to set about this business.

With. And how will you do it ?

Ag. I will write a letter to Lady Fade, asking pardon for having told some malicious falsehoods of her, to a relation on whom she is dependant ; begging she will make up the matter, and forgive me, promising at the same time, most humbly, if she will not expose me for this time, never to offend so any more. Next time he comes I will make him direct the letter himself, that when it falls into his hands again, he may have no doubt of its authenticity. Will this do ?

With. Yes, very well. If he loves you after this, his love is not worth the having.

Ag. Ah, uncle ! You are very hard hearted ! But you are very right : I know you are very right. Pray does not Royston lodge in the same house with Harwood ?

With. He does.

Ag. I wish, by his means, we could conceal ourselves somewhere in his apartments, where we might see Harwood have the letter put into his hands, and observe his behaviour. I don't know any body else who can do this for us : do you think you could put him into good humour again ?

With. I rather think I can, for he hath still a favour to ask of me.

Ag. We must give him a part to act ; do you think he can do it ?

With. He is a very blundering fellow, but he will be so flattered with being let into the secret, that I know he will do his best.

Enter MARIANE.

Mar. What have you been about so long together ?

With. Hatching a new plot ; and we set about it directly too.

Mar. I am very sure the plot is of your own hatching, then ; for I never saw Agnes with any thing of this kind in her head, wear such a grave spiritless face upon it before.

With. You are mistaken, Ma'am, it is of her own contrivance ; but you shall know nothing about it. And I give you warning that this shall be the last of them : if you have got any more poor devils on your hands to torment, do it quickly ; for I will have an end put to all this foolery.

Mar. Very well, uncle ; I have just been following your advice. I have discarded Sir Ulock O'Grady, and I have only now poor Opal to reward for his services. I have got a promise of marriage from him, in which he forfeits ten thousand pounds if he draws back. I shall torment him with this a little. It was an extraordinary thing to be sure for an heiress to demand : but I told him it was the fashion ; and now that he has

bound himself so securely, he is quite at heart's ease, and thinks every thing snug and well settled.

Enter ROYSTON, a Servant announcing him.

With. Your servant, Mr. Royston, I am very glad to see you. Don't start at seeing the ladies with me; I know my niece, Mariane, and you have had a little misunderstanding, but when I have explained the matter to you, you will be friends with her again, and laugh at it yourself.

Roy. (coldly.) I have the honour to wish the ladies good morning.

With. Nay, cousin, you don't understand how it is: these girls have been playing tricks upon every man they have met with since they came here; and when that wild creature (*pointing to Mariane,*) was only laughing at the cheat she had passed upon them all, which I shall explain to you presently, you thought she was laughing at you. Shake hands, and be friends with her, cousin; nobody minds what a foolish girl does.

Roy. (his face brightening up.) O! for that matter, I mind these things as little as any body, cousin Withrington, I have too many affairs of importance on my hands, to attend to such little matters as these. I am glad the young lady had a hearty laugh with all my soul; and I shall be happy to see her as merry again whenever she has a mind to it. I mind it! no, no, no!

Mar. I thank you, Sir; and I hope we shall be

merry again, when you shall have your own share of the joke.

Roy. Yes, yes, we shall be very merry. By the-bye, Withrington, I came here to tell you, that I have got my business with the duke put into so good a train, that it can hardly misgive.

With. I am happy to hear it.

Roy. You must know I have set very artfully about it, cousin ; but I dare say you would guess as much, he, he, he ! You knew me of old, eh ! I have got Mr. Cullyfool to ask it for me on his own account ; I have bribed an old house-keeper, who is to interest a great lady in my favour ; I have called eleven times on his grace's half-cousin, till she has fairly promised to write to the dutchess upon the business : I have written to the steward, and promised his son all my interest at next election, if he has any mind to stand for our borough, you know ; and I have applied by a friend — no, no, he has applied through the medium of another friend, or rather, I believe, by that friend's wife, or aunt, or some way or other, I don't exactly remember, but it is a very good channel, I know.

With. O ! I make no doubt of it.

Roy. Nay, my landlady has engaged her apothecary's wife to speak to his grace's physician about it ; and a medical man, you know, sometimes asks a favour with great advantage, when a patient believes that his life is in his hands. The duke has got a most furious fit of the gout, and it

has been in his stomach too, ha, ha, ha, ha! — If we can't succeed without it, I have a friend who will offer a round sum for me, at last ; but I hope this will not be necessary. Pray, do you know of any other good channel to solicit by ?

With. 'Faith, Royston ! you have found out too many roads to one place already : I fear you'll lose your way amongst them all.

Roy. Nay, nay, cousin, I won't be put off so. I have been told this morning you are acquainted with Sucksop, the duke's greatest friend and adviser. Come, come ! you must use your interest for me.

With. Well, then, come into the other room, and we shall speak about it. I have a favour to ask of you too.

Roy. My dear Sir, any favour in my power you may absolutely command at all times. I'll follow you, cousin. (*Goes to the door with Withrington with great alacrity, but recollecting that he has forgotten to pay his compliments to the ladies, hurries back again, and, after making several very profound bows to them, follows Withrington into another room.*)

Mar. (*imitating him.*) Ha, ha, ha, ha !

Ag. Softly, Mariane ; let us leave this room, if you must laugh, for he will overhear you.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

ROYSTON's Lodgings : enter ROYSTON, conducting
in AGNES, MARIANE, and WITHRINGTON.

Roy. Now, pray compose yourselves, young ladies, and sit down a little. I'll manage every thing : don't give yourselves any trouble ; I'll set the whole plot a-going.

With. We depend entirely upon you, Royston.

Roy. I know you do : many a one depends upon me, cousin Withrington. I'll shew you how I'll manage it. Jonathan, come here, Jonathan ! (*Enter Jonathan.*) Bring me that screen from the other room. (*Exit Jonathan.*) We'll place it here, if you please, cousin, and then you and the ladies can stand as snugly behind it, as kings and queens in a puppet-show, till your time comes to appear. (*Enter Jonathan with screen.*) Come hither with it, Jonathan : place it here. (*Pointing.*) No, no, jolter-head, nearer the wall with it. (*Going behind it, and coming out again.*) It will do better a little more to this side, for then it will be farther from the window.

Ag. O ! it will do very well, Sir ; you take too much trouble.

Roy. Trouble, my dear Ma'am ! If it were a hundred times more trouble, I should be happy to serve you. I don't mind trouble, if I can get the thing done cleverly and completely. That's

my way of doing things. No, it don't stand to please me yet ; it is too near the door now, and the ladies may catch cold, perhaps.

Ag. (very uneasy.) Indeed, it stands very well ! Harwood will be here before we are ready.

Roy. (to Jon.) Blockhead that thou art ! can'st thou not set it up even ? Now, that will do, (*Getting behind it.*) This will do. (*Coming out again.*) Yes, this will do to a nicety.

Mar. (aside.) Heaven be praised, this grand matter is settled at last !

Roy. Now, he'll think it odd, perhaps, that I have a screen in my room ; but I have a trick for that, ladies ; I'll tell him I mean to purchase lands in Canada, and have been looking over the map of America. (*Agnes looks to Withrington very uneasy.*)

With. Don't do that, Royston, for then he will examine the screen.

Roy. Or I may say, there is a chink in the wall, and I placed it to keep out the air.

Ag. No, no, that won't do. For heaven's sake, Sir !

Roy. Then I shall just say, I like to have a screen in my room, for I am used to it at home.

Mar. Bless me, Mr. Royston ! can't you just leave it alone, and he'll take no notice of it.

Roy. O ! if he takes no notice of it, that is a different thing, Miss Withrington : but don't be uneasy, I'll manage it all ; I'll conduct the whole business.

Ag. (*aside to Withrington.*) O ! my good Sir ! this fool will ruin every thing.

With. Be quiet, Agnes, we are in for it now.

Roy. Let me remember my lesson too. Here is the letter for him, with the seal as naturally broken, as if the lady had done it herself. Harwood will wonder, now, how I came to know about all this. 'Faith ! I believe, he thinks me a strange, diving, penetrating kind of a genius, already, and he is not far wrong, perhaps. You know me, cousin Withrington : ha, ha, ha, ha ! You know me.

Ag. O ! I wish it were over, and we were out of this house again !

Roy. Don't be uneasy, Ma'am, I'll manage every thing. — Jonathan ! (*Enter Jonathan,*) don't you go and tell Mr. Harwood that I have got company here.

Jon. No, no, your honour, I knows better than that ; for the ladies are to be behind the screen, Sir, and he must know nothing of the matter, to be sure. I'ficken ! it will be rare sport !

Ag. (*starting.*) I hear a knock at the door.

Roy. It is him, I dare say ; run, Jonathan.

[EXIT Jonathan.]

Ag. Come, come, let us hide ourselves. (*All get behind the screen but Royston.*)

Roy. Ay, ay, it will do very well. (*Looking at the screen.*)

Ag. (*behind.*) Mariane, don't breathe so loud.

Mar. (*behind.*) I don't breathe loud.

Ag. (behind.) Do, uncle, draw in the edge of your coat.

With. (behind.) Poo, silly girl! they can't see a bit of it.

Enter Colonel HARDY and HARWOOD.

Roy. Ha! your servant, my dear Colonel. How goes it, Harwood? I bade my man tell you I was alone, and very much disposed for your good company; but I am doubly fortunate. (*Bowing to the Colonel.*)

Col. Indeed, Royston, I have been pretty much with him these two days past, and I don't believe he gives me great thanks for my company. I am like an old horse running after a colt; the young devil never fails to turn now and then, and give him a kick for his pains.

Har. Nay, my good friend, I must be an ass's colt, then. I am sure, I mean it not; but I am not happy, and fear I have been peevish with you.

Roy. (attempting to look archly.) Peevish, and all that! perhaps the young man is in love, Colonel?

Col. No more, if you please, Royston: we are to speak of this no more.

Enter JONATHAN.

Jon. Did your honour call?

Roy. No, sirrah. (*Jonathan goes, as if he were*

looking for something, and takes a sly peep behind the screen, to see if they are all there.) What are you peeping there for? get along, you hound! Does he want to make people believe I keep rary-shows behind the wainscot? (EXIT Jonathan.) But as I was a-saying, Colonel, perhaps the young man is in love. He, he, he!

Col. No, no, let us have no more of it.

Roy. But 'faith, I know that he is so! and I know the lady too. She is a cousin of my own, and I am as well acquainted with her as I am with my own dog — But you don't ask me what kind of a girl she is. (*To the Colonel.*)

Col. Give over now, Royston; she is a very good girl, I dare say.

Roy. Well, you may think so, but — (*Making significant faces.*) But — I should not say all I know of my own cousin, to be sure, but —

Har. What are all those cursed grimaces for? Her faults are plain and open as her perfections: these she disdains to conceal, and the others it is impossible.

Roy. Softly, Harwood; don't be in a passion, unless you would imitate your mistress; for she has not the gentlest temper in the world.

Har. Well, well, I love her the better for it. I can't bear your insipid passionless women; I would as soon live upon sweet curd all my life, as attach myself to one of them.

Roy. She is very extravagant.

Har. Heaven bless the good folks! would they

have a man to give up the woman of his heart, because she likes a bit of lace upon her petticoat?

Roy. Well, but she is —

Col. Devil take you, Royston! can't you hold your tongue about her? you see he can't bear it.

Roy. (*making signs to the Colonel.*) Let me alone; I know when to speak, and when to hold my tongue, as well as another. Indeed, Harwood, I am your friend; and though the lady is my relation, I must say, I wish you had made a better choice. I have discovered something in regard to her this morning, which shews her to be a very improper one. I cannot say, however, that I have discovered any thing which surprised me; I know her too well.

Har. (*vehemently.*) You are imposed upon by some damn'd falsehood.

Roy. But I have proof of what I say; the lady who is injured by her gave me this letter to shew to Mr. Withrington. (*Taking out the letter.*)

Har. It is some fiend who wants to undermine her, and has forged that scrawl to serve her spiteful purpose.

Roy. I should be glad it were so, my dear friend; but Lady Fade is a woman, whose veracity has never been suspected.

Har. Is it from Lady Fade? Give it me! (*Snatching the letter.*)

Roy. It is Agnes's hand, is it not?

Har. It is, at least, a good imitation of it.

Roy. Read the contents, pray!

Har. “Madam, what I have said to the prejudice of your ladyship’s character to your relation, Mr. Worthy, I am heartily sorry for ; and I am ready to beg pardon on my knees, if you desire it ; to acknowledge before Mr. Worthy himself, that it is a falsehood, or make any other reparation, in a private way, that you may desire. Let me, then, conjure your ladyship not to expose me, and I shall ever remain your most penitent and grateful A. Withrington.”

Roy. The lady would not be so easily pacified, though ; for she blackened her character, in order to make her best friend upon earth quarrel with her ; so she gave me the letter to shew to her uncle. Is it forged, think you ?

Har. It is possible—I will venture to say—Nay, I am sure it is !

Roy. If it is, there is one circumstance which may help to discover the author ; it is directed by a different hand on the back. Look at it.

Har. (*In great perturbation.*) Is it ? (*Turns hastily the folds of the letter, but his hand trembles so much, he can’t find the back.*)

Col. My dear Harwood ! this is the back of the letter, and methinks the writing is somewhat like your own. (*Harwood looks at it ; then staggering back, throws himself into a chair, which happens to be behind him, and covers his upper face with his hand.*)

Col. My dear Harwood !

Roy. See how his lips quiver, and his bosom

heaves ! Let us unbutton him ; I fear he is going into a fit. (*Agnes comes from behind the screen in a fright, and Withrington pulls her in again.*)

Col. (*with great tenderness.*) My dear Harwood !

Har. (*with a broken voice.*) I'll go to mine own chamber. (*Gets up hastily from his chair, and then falls back again in a faint.*)

Col. He has fainted.

Roy. Help, help, here ! (*Running about.*) Who has got hartshorn, or lavender, or water ? help here ! (*They all come from behind the screen. Agnes runs to Harwood, and sprinkles him over with lavender, rubbing his temples, &c., whilst Colonel Hardy stares at them all in amazement.*)

Ag. Alas ! we have carried this too far ! Harwood ! my dear Harwood !

Col. (*to Roy.*) What is all this ?

Roy. I thought we should amaze you. I knew I should manage it.

Col. You have managed finely indeed, to put Harwood into such a state with your mummery,

Ag. Will he not come to himself again ? Get some water, Mariane—See how pale he is ! (*He recovers.*) O ! he recovers ! Harwood ! do you know me, Harwood ?

Har. (*looking upon Agnes, and shrinking back from her.*) Ha ! what has brought you here ? leave me ! leave me ! I am wretched enough already.

Ag. I come to bring you relief, my dear Harwood.

Har. No, madam, it is misery you bring. We must part for ever.

Ag. O! uncle! do you hear that? He says we must part for ever.

With. (*taking hold of Agnes.*) Don't be in such a hurry about it.

Har. (*rising up.*) How came you here? (*to Withrington,*) and these ladies?

Roy. O! it was all my contrivance.

With. Pray now, Royston, be quiet a little.— Mr. Harwood, I will speak to you seriously. I see you are attached to my niece, and I confess she has many faults; but you are a man of sense, and with you she will make a more respectable figure in the world than with any other; I am anxious for her welfare, and if you will marry her, I will give her such a fortune as will make it no longer an imprudent step to follow your inclinations.

Har. No, Sir, you shall keep your fortune and your too bewitching niece together. For her sake I would have renounced all ambition; I would have shared with her poverty and neglect; I would have borne with all her faults and weaknesses of nature; I would have toiled, I would have bled for her; but I can never yoke myself with unworthiness.

Ag. (*wiping her eyes, and giving two skips upon the floor.*) O! admirable! admirable! speak to him, uncle! tell him all, my dear uncle! for I can't say a word.

Col. (*aside to Royston.*) Isn't she a little wrong in the head, Royston?

With. Give me your hand, Harwood: you are a noble fellow, and you shall marry this little girl of mine after all. This story of the letter and Lady Fade, was only a concerted one amongst us, to prove what mettle you are made of. Agnes, to try your love, affected to be shrewish and extravagant; and afterwards, at my suggestion, to try your principles, contrived this little plot, which has just now been unravelled; but I do assure you, on the word of an honest man, there is not a better girl in the kingdom. I must own, however, she is a fanciful little toad. (*Harwood runs to Agnes, catches her in his arms, and runs two or three times round with her, then takes her hand and kisses it, and then puts his knee to the ground.*)

Har. My charming, my delightful Agnes! Oh! what a fool have I been! how could I suppose it?

Ag. We took some pains with you, and it would have been hard, if we could not have deceived you amongst us all.

Har. And so thou art a good girl, a very good girl. I know thou art. I'll be hang'd if thou hast one fault in the world.

With. No, no, Harwood, not quite so perfect. I can prove her still to be an arrant cheat; for she pretended to be careless of you when she thought of you all the day long; and she pretended to be poor with an hundred thousand pounds, indepen-

dant of any one, in her possession. She is Miss Withrington the heiress; and this lady, (*pointing to Mariane,*) has only been her representative for a time, for reasons which I shall explain to you by-and-by. (*Harwood lets go Agnes's hand, and steps back some paces with a certain gravity and distance in his air.*)

With. What is the matter now, Harwood? does this cast a damp upon you?

Roy. It is a weighty distress truly. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

Col. By heaven this is good.

Ag. (*going up to Harwood, and holding out her hand.*) Do not look so distantly upon me, Harwood: you was willing to marry me as a poor woman; if there is any thing in my fortune which offends you, I scatter it to the winds.

Har. My admirable girl! it is astonishment, it is something I cannot express, which overcomes, I had almost said distresses me, at present. (*Presenting her to the Colonel.*) Colonel Hardy, this is the woman I have raved about! this is the woman I have boasted of! this is my Agnes! and this, Miss Withrington, is Colonel Hardy, my own, and my father's friend.

Ag. (*holding out her hand to the Colonel.*) He shall be mine too. Every friend of yours shall be my friend, Harwood; but the friend to your father my most respected one.

Har. Do you hear that, Colonel?

Col. I hear it; my heart hears it, and blesses you both.

Har. (to *With.*) My dear Sir, what shall I say to you for all this goodness?

Ag. Tell him he is the dearest good uncle on earth, and we will love him all our lives for it. Yes, indeed, we will, uncle, (*taking his hand,*) very, very dearly!

Roy. Now, good folks, have not I managed it cleverly?

Mar. Pray let me come from the back ground a little; and since I must quit all the splendour of heiresship, I desire, at least, that I may have some respect paid me for having filled the situation so well, as the old Mayor receives the thanks of the corporation, when the new Mayor—Bless me! here comes Opal! I have not quite done with it yet.

With. Your servant, Mr. Opal.

Mar. (to *Op.*) Are you not surprised to find us all here?

Op. Harwood I know is a very lucky fellow, but I knew you were here. It is impossible, you see, to escape me, But (*half aside to Mariane.*) I wanted to tell you Colonel Beaumont is come to Bath. Now I should like to be introduced to him on his arrival. He will be very much the fashion, I dare say, and I should like to have a friendship for him. You understand me? You can procure this for me, I know.

With. Come, Mr. Opal, you must join in our good humour here, for we have just been making up a match. My niece, Agnes, with a large fortune, bestows herself on a worthy man, who

would have married her without one ; and Mariane, who for certain reasons has assumed her character of heiress since we came to Bath, leaves all her borrowed state, in hopes that the man who would have married her with a fortune, will not now forsake her.

Op. (stammering.) Wh—Wh—What is all this?

Roy. (half aside to Opal.) You seem disturbed, Mr. Opal ; you have not been paying your addresses to her, I hope.

Op. (aside to Royston.) No, not paying my addresses ; that is to say, not absolutely. I have paid her some attention to be sure.

Roy. (nodding significantly.) It is well for you it is no worse.

Mar. (turning to Opal, who looks very much frightened.) What is it you say ? Don't you think I overheard it ? Not paid your addresses to me ! O ! you false man ! can you deny the declarations you have made ? the oaths you have sworn ? O ! you false man !

Op. Upon honour, Madam, we men of the world don't expect to be called to an account for every foolish thing we say.

Mar. What you have written then shall witness against you. Will you deny this promise of marriage in your own hand-writing ? (*Taking out a paper.*)

Roy. (aside to Op.) What ! a promise of marriage, Mr. Opal ! The devil himself could not

have put it into your head to do a worse thing than this.

Op. (*very frightened, but making a great exertion.*) Don't think, Ma'am, to bully me into the match. I can prove that promise to be given to you under the false character of an heiress, therefore your deceit loosens the obligation.

With. Take care what you say, Sir; (*to Op.*) I will not see my niece wronged. The law shall do her justice, whatever expence it may cost me.

Mar. Being an heiress, or not, has nothing to do in the matter, Mr. Opal; for you expressly say in this promise, that my beauty and perfections alone have induced you to engage yourself; and I will take all the men in court to witness, whether I am not as handsome to-day as I was yesterday.

Op. I protest there is not such a word in the paper.

Mar. (*holding out the paper.*) O base man! will you deny your own writing? (*Op. snatches the paper from her, tears it to pieces.*)

Mar. (*gathering up the scattered pieces.*) O! I can put them together again. (*Op. snatching up one of the pieces, crams it into his mouth and chews it.*)

Roy. Chew fast, Opal! she will snatch it out of your mouth else. There is another bit for you. (*Offering him another piece.*)

Mar. (*bursting into a loud laugh, in which all the company join.*) Is it very nice, Mr. Opal? You

munch it up as expeditiously as a bit of plum-cake.

Op. What the deuce does all this mean?

With. This naughty girl, Mr. Opal, has only been amusing herself with your promise, which she never meant to make any other use of; she is already engaged to a very worthy young man, who will receive with her a fortune by no means contemptible.

Op. Well, well, much good may it do him: what do I care about — (*mumbling to himself.*)

Roy. Ha, ha, ha! how some people do get themselves into scrapes! They have no more notion of managing their affairs than so many sheep. Ha, ha, ha!

Enter HUMPHRY.

Humph. (*to Roy.*) I would speak a word with your honour. (*Whispers to Royston.*)

Roy. (*in a rage.*) What! given away the place! It is impossible! It is some wicked machination! It is some damn'd trick!

With. Be moderate, Royston; what has good Mr. Humphry been telling you?

Roy. O! the devil of a bite! his Grace has given away the place to a poor simpleton, who had never a soul to speak for him!

With. Who told you this, Mr Humphry?

Humph. Truly, Sir, I called upon his Grace's gentleman, just to make up a kind of acquaintance

with him, as his honour desired me, and he told me it was given away this morning.

Roy. What cursed luck !

Humph. "Why," says I, "I thought my master was to have had it, Mr. Smoothly." "And so he would," says he, "but one person came to the Duke after another, teasing him about Mr. Royston, till he grew quite impatient ; for there was but one of all those friends," says he, winking with his eye so, "who did speak at last to the purpose ; but then, upon Mr. Sucksop's taking up your master's interest, he shrunk back from his word, which offended his Grace very much."

Roy. Blundering blockhead !

Humph. And so he gave away the place directly to poor Mr. Drudgewell, who had no recommendation at all, but fifteen years' hard service in the office.

Roy. Well, now ! well, now ! you see how the world goes ; simpletons and idiots carry every thing before them.

With. Nay, Royston, blame yourself too. Did not I tell you, you had found out too many roads to one place, and would lose your way amongst them ?

Roy. No, no, it is all that cursed perverse fate of mine ! By the Lord, half the trouble I have taken for this paltry office, would have procured some people an archbishoprick ! There is Harwood, now, fortune presses herself upon him, and makes him, at one stroke, an idle gentleman for life.

Har. No, Sir, an idle gentleman I will never be: my Agnes shall never be the wife of any thing so contemptible.

Ag. I thank you, Harwood; I do, indeed, look for honourable distinction in being your wife. You shall still exert your powers in the profession you have chosen: you shall be the weak one's stay, the poor man's advocate; you shall gain fair fame in recompense, and that will be our nobility.

With. Well said, my children! you have more sense than I thought you had amongst all these whimsies. Now, let us take our leave of plots and story-telling, if you please, and all go to my house to supper. Royston shall drown his disappointment in a can of warm negus, and Mr. Opal shall have something more palatable than his last spare morsel.

[EXEUNT.]

THE END OF THE TRYAL.

DE MONFORT:

A TRAGEDY.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN :

DE MONFORT.

REZENVELT.

COUNT FREBERG, *Friend to De Monfort and Rezenvelt.*

MANUEL, *Servant to De Monfort.*

JEROME, *De Monfort's old Landlord.*

CONRAD, *an artful Knave.*

BERNARD, *a Monk.*

Monks, Gentlemen, Officers, Page, &c. &c.

WOMEN :

JANE DE MONFORT, *Sister to De Monfort.*

COUNTESS FREBERG, *Wife to Freberg.*

THERESA, *Servant to the Countess.*

Abbess, Nuns, *and a Lay Sister, Ladies, &c.*

Scene, a Town in Germany.

DE MONFORT.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — JEROME'S House. *A large old-fashioned chamber.*

Jer. (speaking without.) This way, good masters.

Enter JEROME, bearing a light, and followed by MANUEL, and servants carrying luggage.

Rest your burthens here.

This spacious room will please the Marquis best.
He takes me unawares ; but ill prepar'd :
If he had sent, e'en tho' a hasty notice,
I had been glad.

Man. Be not disturb'd, good Jerome ;
Thy house is in most admirable order ;
And they who travel o' cold winter nights
Think homeliest quarters good.

Jer. He is not far behind ?

Man. A little way.
(*To the Servants.*) Go you and wait below till he arrives.

Jer. (shaking Manuel by the hand.) Indeed, my friend, I'm glad to see you here.
Yet marvel wherefore.

Man. I marvel wherefore too, my honest Jerome :
But here we are ; pri'thee be kind to us.

Jer. Most heartily I will. I love your master :
He is a quiet and a lib'ral man :
A better inmate never cross'd my door.

Man. Ah ! but he is not now the man he was.
Lib'ral he'll be. God grant he may be quiet.

Jer. What has befallen him ?

Man. I cannot tell thee ;
But, faith, there is no living with him now.

Jer. And yet, methinks, if I remember well,
You were about to quit his service, Manuel,
When last he left this house. You grumbled
then.

Man. I've been upon the eve of leaving him
These ten long years ; for many times is he
So difficult, capricious, and distrustful,
He galls my nature — yet, I know not how,
A secret kindness binds me to him still.

Jer. Some, who offend from a suspicious nature,
Will afterward such fair confession make
As turns e'en the offence into a favour.

Man. Yes, some indeed do so ; so will not he :
He'd rather die than such confession make.

Jer. Ay, thou art right ; for now I call to mind
That once he wrong'd me with unjust suspicion,
When first he came to lodge beneath my roof ;
And when it so fell out that I was prov'd
Most guiltless of the fault, I truly thought
He would have made profession of regret.

But silent, haughty, and ungraciously
He bore himself as one offended still.
Yet shortly after, when unwittingly
I did him some slight service, o'the sudden
He overpower'd me with his grateful thanks ;
And would not be restrain'd from pressing on me
A noble recompense. I understood
His o'erstrain'd gratitude and bounty well,
And took it as he meant.

Man.

'Tis often thus.

I would have left him many years ago,
But that with all his faults there sometimes come
Such bursts of natural goodness from his heart,
As might engage a harder churl than me
To serve him still. — And then his sister too ;
A noble dame, who should have been a queen :
The meanest of her hinds, at her command,
Had fought like lions for her, and the poor,
E'en o'er their bread of poverty, had bless'd her —
She would have griev'd if I had left my Lord.

Jer. Comes she along with him ?

Man. No, he departed all unknown to her,
Meaning to keep conceal'd his secret route ;
But well I knew it would afflict her much,
And therefore left a little nameless billet,
Which after our departure, as I guess,
Would fall into her hands, and tell her all.
What could I do ? O 'tis a noble lady !

Jer. All this is strange — something disturbs
his mind —

Belike he is in love.

Man. No, Jerome, no.
Once on a time I serv'd a noble master,
Whose youth was blasted with untoward love,
And he with hope and fear and jealousy
For ever toss'd, led an unquiet life :
Yet, when unruffled by the passing fit,
His pale wan face such gentle sadness wore
As mov'd a kindly heart to pity him.
But Monfort, even in his calmest hour,
Still bears that gloomy sternness in his eye
Which powerfully repels all sympathy.
O no! good Jerome, no, it is not love.

Jer. Hear I not horses trampling at the gate?
(*Listening.*)

He is arrived — stay thou — I had forgot —
A plague upon't! my head is so confus'd —
I will return i'the instant to receive him.

(*EXIT hastily.*)

(*A great bustle without. EXIT Manuel with lights, and returns again, lighting in DE MONFORT, as if just alighted from his journey.*)

Man. Your ancient host, my Lord, receives
you gladly,
And your apartment will be soon prepar'd.

De Mon. 'Tis well.

Man. Where shall I place the chest you gave
in charge?

So please you, say my Lord.

De Mon. (*throwing himself into a chair.*) Where-
e'er thou wilt.

Man. I would not move that luggage till you came. (*Pointing to certain things.*)

De Mon. Move what thou wilt, and trouble me no more.

(*Manuel, with the assistance of other servants, sets about putting the things in order, and De Monfort remains sitting in a thoughtful posture.*)

Enter JEROME, bearing wine, &c. on a salver. As he approaches De Monfort, Manuel pulls him by the sleeve.

Man. (*aside to Jerome.*) No, do not now ; he will not be disturb'd.

Jer. What ! not to bid him welcome to my house,

And offer some refreshment ?

Man. No, good Jerome.
Softly a little while : I pri'thee do.

Jerome walks softly on tiptoes, till he gets behind De Monfort, then peeping on one side to see his face.)

Jer. (*aside to Manuel.*) Ah, Manuel, what an alter'd man is here !

His eyes are hollow, and his cheeks are pale —
He left this house a comely gentleman.

De Mon. Who whispers there ?

Man. 'Tis your old landlord, Sir.

Jer. I joy to see you here — I crave your pardon —

I fear I do intrude —

De Mon. No, my kind host, I am obliged to thee.

Jer. How fares it with your honour?

De Mon. Well enough.

Jer. Here is a little of the fav'rite wine
That you were wont to praise. Pray honour me.
(*Fills a glass.*)

De Mon. (*after drinking.*) I thank you, Jerome,
'tis delicious.

Jer. Ay, my dear wife did ever make it so.

De Mon. And how does she?

Jer. Alas, my Lord! she's dead.

De Mon. Well, then she is at rest.

Jer. How well, my Lord?

De Mon. Is she not with the dead, the quiet
dead,

Where all is peace? Not e'en the impious wretch,
Who tears the coffin from its earthy vault,
And strews the mould'ring ashes to the wind,
Can break their rest.

Jer. Woe's me! I thought you would have
grieved for her.

She was a kindly soul! Before she died,
When pining sickness bent her cheerless head,
She set my house in order —
And but the morning ere she breath'd her last,
Bade me preserve some flaskets of this wine,
That should the Lord de Monfort come again
His cup might sparkle still. (*De Monfort walks
across the stage, and wipes his eyes.*)
Indeed I fear I have distress'd you, Sir;

I surely thought you would be grieved for her.

De Mon. (*taking Jerome's hand.*) I am, my friend. How long has she been dead?

Jer. Two sad long years.

De Mon. Would she were living still!

I was too troublesome, too heedless of her.

Jer. O no! she lov'd to serve you.

(*Loud knocking without.*)

De Mon. What fool comes here, at such untimely hours,

To make this cursed noise? (*To Manuel.*) Go to the gate. (*EXIT Manuel.*)

All sober citizens are gone to bed;

It is some drunkards on their nightly rounds,

Who mean it but in sport.

Jer. I hear unusual voices — here they come.

Re-enter MANUEL, shewing in Count FREBERG and his LADY, with a mask in her hand.

Freb. (*running to embrace De Mon.*) My dearest Monfort! most unlook'd for pleasure!

Do I indeed embrace thee here again?

I saw thy servant standing by the gate,

His face recall'd, and learnt the joyful tidings!

Welcome, thrice welcome here!

De Mon. I thank thee, Freberg, for this friendly visit,

And this fair Lady too. (*Bowing to the Lady.*)

Lady. I fear, my Lord,

We do intrude at an untimely hour:

But now, returning from a midnight mask,
My husband did insist that we should enter.

Freb. No, say not so ; no hour untimely call,
Which doth together bring long absent friends.
Dear Monfort, why hast thou so slyly play'd,
To come upon us thus so suddenly ?

De Mon. O ! many varied thoughts do cross
our brain,
Which touch the will, but leave the memory
trackless ;
And yet a strange compounded motive make,
Wherefore a man should bend his evening walk
To th' east or west, the forest or the field.
Is it not often so ?

Freb. I ask no more, happy to see you here
From any motive. There is one behind,
Whose presence would have been a double bliss :
Ah ! how is she ? The noble Jane De Monfort.

De Mon. (*confused.*) She is — I have — I left
my sister well.

Lady. (*to Freberg.*) My Freberg, you are heed-
less of respect :
You surely mean to say the Lady Jane.

Freb. Respect ! No, Madam ; Princess, Em-
press, Queen,
Could not denote a creature so exalted
As this plain appellation doth,
The noble Jane De Monfort.

Lady. (*turning from him displeased to Mon.*)
You are fatigued, my Lord ; you want repose ;

Say, should we not retire?

Freb.

Ha! is it so?

My friend, your face is pale, have you been ill?

De Mon. No, Freberg, no; I think I have been well.

Freb. (*shaking his head.*) I fear thou hast not,
Monfort — Let it pass.

We'll re-establish thee: we'll banish pain.

I will collect some rare, some cheerful friends,

And we shall spend together glorious hours,

That gods might envy. Little time so spent

Doth far outvalue all our life beside.

This is indeed our life, our waking life,

The rest dull breathing sleep.

De Mon. Thus, it is true, from the sad years
of life

We sometimes do short hours, yea minutes strike,

Keen, blissful bright, never to be forgotten;

Which, thro' the dreary gloom of time o'erpast,

Shine like fair sunny spots on a wild waste.

But few they are, as few the heaven-fir'd souls

Whose magick power creates them. Bless'd art
thou,

If, in the ample circle of thy friends,

Thou canst but boast a few.

Freb. Judge for thyself: in truth I do not boast.

There is amongst my friends, my later friends,

A most accomplish'd stranger: new to Amberg;

But just arriv'd, and will ere long depart,

I met him in Franconia two years since.

He is so full of pleasant anecdote,

So rich, so gay, so poignant is his wit,
 Time vanishes before him as he speaks,
 And ruddy morning thro' the lattice peeps
 Ere night seems well begun.

De Mon. How is he call'd?

Freb. I will surprise thee with a welcome face :
 I will not tell thee now.

Lady. (to Mon.) I have, my Lord, a small
 request to make,
 And must not be denied. I too may boast
 Of some good friends, and beauteous country-
 women :

To-morrow night I open wide my doors
 To all the fair and gay : beneath my roof
 Musick, and dance, and revelry shall reign :
 I pray you come and grace it with your presence.

De Mon. You honour me too much to be denied.

Lady. I thank you, Sir ; and in return for this,
 We shall withdraw, and leave you to repose.

Freb. Must it be so ? Good night — sweet sleep
 to thee ! (To De Monfort.)

De Mon. (to Freb.) Good night. (To Lady.)
 Good night, fair Lady.

Lady. Farewell !

[EXEUNT Freberg and Lady.]

De Mon. (to Jer.) I thought Count Freberg
 had been now in France.

Jer. He meant to go, as I have been inform'd.

De Mon. Well, well, prepare my bed ; I will
 to rest. (EXIT Jerome.)

De Mon. (*aside.*) I know not how it is, my
heart stands back,
And meets not this man's love. — Friends! rarest
friends!
Rather than share his undiscerning praise
With every table-wit, and book-form'd sage,
And paltry poet puling to the moon,
I'd court from him proscription, yea abuse,
And think it proud distinction. (EXIT.)

SCENE II.

*A small Apartment in JEROME's House : a table and
breakfast set out. Enter DE MONFORT, followed
by MANUEL, and sets himself down by the table,
with a cheerful face.*

De Mon. Manuel, this morning's sun shines
pleasantly :
These old apartments too are light and cheerful.
Our landlord's kindness has reviv'd me much ;
He serves as though he lov'd me. This pure air
Braces the listless nerves, and warms the blood :
I feel in freedom here.

(*Filling a cup of coffee, and drinking.*)

Man. Ah ! sure, my Lord,
No air is purer than the air at home.

De Mon. Here can I wander with assured steps,
Nor dread, at every winding of the path,
Lest an abhorred serpent cross my way,
To move — (*Stopping short.*)

Man. What says your honour ?

There are no serpents in our pleasant fields.

De Mon. Think'st thou there are no serpents in
the world,

But those who slide along the grassy sod,
And sting the luckless foot that presses them ?
There are who in the path of social life
Do bask their spotted skins in Fortune's sun,
And sting the soul — Ay, till its healthful frame
Is chang'd to secret, fest'ring, sore disease,
So deadly is the wound.

Man. Heaven guard your honour from such
horrid skathe !

They are but rare, I hope !

De Mon. (*shaking his head.*) We mark the hol-
low eye, the wasted frame,
The gait disturb'd of wealthy honour'd men,
But do not know the cause.

Man. 'Tis very true. God keep you well, my
Lord !

De Mon. I thank thee, Manuel, I am very well.
I shall be gay too, by the setting sun.
I go to revel it with sprightly dames,
And drive the night away.

(*Filling another cup, and drinking.*)

Man. I should be glad to see your honour gay.

De Mon. And thou too shalt be gay. There,
honest Manuel,
Put these broad pieces in thy leathern purse,
And take at night a cheerful jovial glass.
Here is one too, for Bremer : he loves wine ;
And one for Jaques : be joyful all together.

Enter SERVANT.

Ser. My Lord, I met e'en now, a short way off,
Your countryman the Marquis Rezenvelt.

De Mon. (*starting from his seat, and letting the
cup fall from his hand.*) Who says't thou ?

Ser. Marquis Rezenvelt, an' please you.

De Mon. Thou ly'st — it is not so — it is impossible !

Ser. I saw him with these eyes, plain as yourself.

De Mon. Fool ! 'tis some passing stranger thou
hast seen,

And with a hideous likeness been deceiv'd.

Ser. No other stranger could deceive my sight.

De Mon. (*dashing his clenched hand violently
upon the table, and overturning every thing.*)
Heaven blast thy sight ! it lights on nothing good.

Ser. I surely thought no harm to look upon
him.

De Mon. What, dost thou still insist ? Him
must it be ?

Does it so please thee well ? (*Servant endeavours
to speak.*) Hold thy damn'd tongue !

By heaven I'll kill thee ! (*Going furiously up to him.*)

Man. (*in a soothing voice.*) Nay, harm him not,
my Lord ; he speaks the truth ;

I've met his groom, who told me certainly

His Lord is here. I should have told you so,

But thought, perhaps, it might displease your
honour.

De Mon. (*becoming all at once calm, and turning sternly to Manuel.*) And how dar'st thou to think it would displease me?

What is't to me who leaves or enters Amberg?

But it displeases me, yea ev'n to frenzy,
That every idle fool must hither come,
To break my leisure with the paltry tidings
Of all the cursed things he stares upon.

(*Servant attempts to speak — De Monfort stamps with his foot.*)

Take thine ill-favour'd visage from my sight,
And speak of it no more. (EXIT SERVANT.)
And go thou too; I choose to be alone.

(EXIT MANUEL.)

(*De Monfort goes to the door by which they went out; opens it, and looks.*)

But is he gone indeed? Yes, he is gone.

(*Goes to the opposite door, opens it, and looks: then gives loose to all the fury of gesture, and walks up and down in great agitation.*)

It is too much: by heaven it is too much!

He haunts me—stings me—like a devil haunts—

He'll make a raving maniac of me—Villain!

The air wherein thou draw'st thy fulsome breath
Is poison to me—Oceans shall divide us! (*Pauses.*)

But no; thou think'st I fear thee, cursed reptile;

And hast a pleasure in the damned thought.

Though my heart's blood should curdle at thy sight,
I'll stay and face thee still.

(*Knocking at the chamber door.*)

Ha! who knocks there?

Freberg. (without.) It is thy friend, De Monfort.

De Mon. (opening the door.) Enter, then.

Enter FREBERG.

Freb. (taking his hand kindly.) How art thou now? How hast thou past the night?

Has kindly sleep refresh'd thee?

De Mon. Yes, I have lost an hour or two in sleep,

And so should be refresh'd.

Freb. And art thou not?

Thy looks speak not of rest. Thou art disturb'd.

De Mon. No, somewhat ruffled from a foolish cause,

Which soon will pass away.

Freb. (shaking his head.) Ah no, De Monfort! something in thy face

Tells me another tale. Then wrong me not:

If any secret grief distract thy soul,

Here am I all devoted to thy love:

Open thy heart to me. What troubles thee?

De Mon. I have no grief: distress me not, my friend.

Freb. Nay, do not call me so. Wert thou my friend,

Wouldst thou not open all thine inmost soul,

And bid me share its every consciousness?

De Mon. Freberg, thou know'st not man; not nature's man,

But only him who, in smooth studied works

Of polish'd sages, shines deceitfully
In all the splendid foppery of virtue.
That man was never born whose secret soul,
With all its motley treasure of dark thoughts,
Foul fantasies, vain musings, and wild dreams,
Was ever open'd to another's scan.
Away, away ! it is delusion all.

Freb. Well, be reserv'd then ; perhaps I'm
wrong.

De Mon. How goes the hour ?

Freb. 'Tis early still ; a long day lies before us ?
Let us enjoy it. Come along with me ;
I'll introduce you to my pleasant friend.

De Mon. Your pleasant friend ?

Freb. Yes, him of whom I spake.
(*Taking his hand.*)

There is no good I would not share with thee ;
And this man's company, to minds like thine,
Is the best banquet-feast I could bestow.
But I will speak in mystery no more ;
It is thy townsman, noble Rezenvelt.

(*De Mon. pulls his hand hastily from Fre-
berg, and shrinks back.*) Ha ! what is this ?
Art thou pain-stricken, Monfort ?

Nay, on my life, thou rather seem'st offended :
Does it displease thee that I call him friend ?

De Mon. No, all men are thy friends.

Freb. No, say not all men. But thou art
offended.

I see it well. I thought to do thee pleasure.

But if his presence is not welcome here,
He shall not join our company to-day.

De Mon. What dost thou mean to say ? What
is't to me

Whether I meet with such a thing as Rezenvelt
To-day, to-morrow, every day, or never ?

Freb. In truth, I thought you had been well
with him ;

He prais'd you much

De Mon. I thank him for his praise — Come,
let us move :

This chamber is confin'd and airless grown.

(*Starting.*)

I hear a stranger's voice !

Freb. 'Tis Rezenvelt.

Let him be told that we are gone abroad.

De Mon. (*proudly,*) No ! let him enter. Who
waits there ? Ho ! Manuel !

Enter MANUEL.

What stranger speaks below ?

Man. The Marquis Rezenvelt.

I have not told him that you are within.

De Mon. (*angrily,*) And wherefore didst thou
not ? Let him ascend.

(*A long pause. De Monfort walking up and
down with a quick pace.*)

*Enter REZENVELT, and runs freely up to De
Monfort.*

Rez. (*to De Mon.*) My noble Marquis, welcome !

De Mon. Sir, I thank you.

Rez. (to *Freb.*) My gentle friend, well met.

Abroad so early ?

Freb. It is indeed an early hour for me.

How sits thy last night's revel on thy spirits ?

Rez. O, light as ever. . On my way to you,
E'en now, I learnt De Monfort was arriv'd,
And turn'd my steps aside ; so here I am.

(*Bowing gaily to De Monfort.*)

De Mon. I thank you, Sir ; you do me too
much honour. (*Proudly.*)

Rez. Nay, say not so ; not too much honour
surely,

Unless, indeed, 'tis more than pleases you.

De Mon. (*confused.*) Having no previous notice
of your coming,

I look'd not for it.

Rez. Ay, true indeed ; when I approach you
next,

I'll send a herald to proclaim my coming,
And bow to you by sound of trumpet, Marquis.

De Mon. (to *Freb.* *turning haughtily from Rezenvelt with affected indifference.*) How does
your cheerful friend, that good old man ?

Freb. My cheerful friend ? I know not whom
you mean.

De Mon. Count Waterlan.

Freb. I know not one so nam'd

De Mon. (*very confused.*) O pardon me — it
was at Bâle I knew him.

Freb. You have not yet inquir'd for honest Reisdale.

I met him as I came, and mention'd you.
He seem'd amaz'd ; and fain he would have learnt
What cause procur'd us so much happiness.
He question'd hard, and hardly would believe,
I could not satisfy his strong desire.

Rez. And know you not what brings De Monfort here ?

Freb. Truly, I do not.

Rez. O ! 'tis love of me.

I have but two short days in Amberg been,
And here with postman's speed he follows me,
Finding his home so dull and tiresome grown.

Freb. (to De Mon.) Is Rezenvelt so sadly miss'd
with you ?

Your town so chang'd ?

De Mon. Not altogether so ;
Some witlings and jest-mongers still remain
For fools to laugh at.

Rez. But he laughs not, and therefore he is
wise.

He ever frowns on them with sullen brow
Contemptuous ; therefore he is very wise.
Nay, daily frets his most refined soul
With their poor folly, to its inmost core ;
Therefore he is most eminently wise.

Freb. Fy, Rezenvelt ! you are too early gay.
Such spirits rise but with the ev'ning glass :
They suit not placid morn.

(*To De Monfort, who, after walking impatiently up and down, comes close to his ear, and lays hold of his arm.*)

What would you, Monfort ?

De Mon. Nothing — what is't o'clock ?

No, no — I had forgot — 'tis early still.

(*Turns away again.*)

Freb. (*to Rez.*) Waltser informs me that you have agreed

To read his verses o'er, and tell the truth.

It is a dangerous task.

Rez. Yet I'll be honest :

I can but lose his favour and a feast.

(*Whilst they speak, De Monfort walks up and down impatiently and irresolute : at last pulls the bell violently.*)

Enter SERVANT.

De Mon. (*to Ser.*) What dost thou want ?

Ser. I thought your honour rung.

De Mon. I have forgot — stay ; are my horses saddled ?

Ser. I thought, my Lord, you would not ride to-day,

After so long a journey.

De Mon. (*impatiently.*) Well — 'tis good.

Begone ! — I want thee not. [EXIT SERVANT.

Rez. (*smiling significantly.*) I humbly crave your pardon, gentle Marquis.

It grieves me that I cannot stay with you,

And make my visit of a friendly length.
I trust your goodness will excuse me now ;
Another time I shall be less unkind.

(*To Freberg.*) Will you not go with me ?

Freb. Excuse me, Monfort, I'll return again.

[*EXEUNT Rezenvelt and Freberg.*]

De Mon. (*alone, tossing his arms distractedly.*)

Hell hath no greater torment for th' accurs'd
Than this man's presence gives —
Abhorred fiend ! he hath a pleasure too,
A damned pleasure in the pain he gives !
Oh ! the side glance of that detested eye !
That conscious smile ! that full insulting lip !
It touches every nerve : it makes me mad.
What, does it please thee ? Dost thou woo my
hate ?

Hate shalt thou have ! determin'd, deadly hate.
Which shall awake no smile. Malignant villain !
The venom of thy mind is rank and devilish,
And thin the film that hides it.
Thy hateful visage ever spoke thy worth :
I loath'd thee when a boy.
That men should be besotted with him thus !
And Freberg likewise so bewitched is,
That like a hireling flatt'rer, at his heels
He meanly paces, off'ring brutish praise.
O ! I could curse him too !

[*EXIT.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *A very splendid apartment in Count FREBERG's house, fancifully decorated. A wide folding door opened, shows another magnificent room lighted up to receive company. Enter through the folding doors the Count and Countess, richly dressed.*

Freb. (looking round.) In truth, I like those decorations well :

They suit those lofty walls. And here, my love,
The gay profusion of a woman's fancy
Is well display'd. Noble simplicity
Becomes us less, on such a night as this,
Than gaudy show.

Lady. Is it not noble then? (*He shakes his head.*) I thought it so ;
And as I know you love simplicity,
I did intend it should be simple too.

Freb. Be satisfy'd, I pray ; we want to-night
A cheerful banquet-house, and not a temple.
How runs the hour ?

Lady. It is not late, but soon we shall be rous'd
With the loud entry of our frolic guests.

Enter a PAGE, richly dressed.

Page. Madam, there is a lady in your hall,
Who begs to be admitted to your presence.

Lady. Is it not one of our invited friends ?

Page. No, far unlike to them ; it is a stranger.

Lady. How looks her countenance ?

Page. So queenly, so commanding, and so noble,
I shrunk at first in awe ; but when she smil'd,
For so she did to see me thus abash'd,
Methought I could have compass'd sea and land
To do her bidding.

Lady. Is she young or old ?

Page. Neither, if right I guess ; but she is fair :
For time hath laid his hand so gently on her,
As he too had been aw'd.

Lady. The foolish stripling !
She has bewitch'd thee. Is she large in stature ?

Page. So stately and so graceful is her form,
I thought at first her stature was gigantic ;
But on a near approach I found, in truth,
She scarcely does surpass the middle size.

Lady. What is her garb ?

Page. I cannot well describe the fashion of it.
She is not deck'd in any gallant trim,
But seems to me clad in the usual weeds
Of high habitual state ; for as she moves
Wide flows her robe in many a waving fold,
As I have seen unfurled banners play
With the soft breeze.

Lady. Thine eyes deceive thee, boy ;
It is an apparition thou hast seen.

Freb. (*starting from his seat, where he has been sitting during the conversation between the Lady and the Page.*) It is an apparition he has seen,
Or it is Jane De Monfort. [EXIT, hastily.

Lady. (displeased.) No; such description surely suits not her.

Did she inquire for me?

Page. She ask'd to see the lady of Count Freberg.

Lady. Perhaps it is not she — I fear it is —
Ha! here they come. He has but guess'd too well.

Enter FREBERG, leading in JANE DE MONFORT.

Freb. (presenting her to Lady.) Here, Madam, welcome a most worthy guest.

Lady. Madam, a thousand welcomes! Pardon me;

I could not guess who honour'd me so far;
I should not else have waited coldly here.

Jane. I thank you for this welcome, gentle Countess;

But take those kind excuses back again;

I am a bold intruder on this hour,

And am entitled to no ceremony.

I came in quest of a dear truant friend,

But Freberg has inform'd me —

(*To Freberg.*) And he is well you say?

Freb. Yes, well, but joyless.

Jane. It is the usual temper of his mind;

It opens not, but with the thrilling touch

Of some strong heart-string o'the sudden press'd.

Freb. It may be so, I've known him otherwise:
He is suspicious grown.

Jane. Not so, Count Freberg, Monfort is too noble.

Say rather, that he is a man in grief,
Wearing at times a strange and scowling eye ;
And thou, less generous than beseems a friend,
Hast thought too hardly of him.

Freb. (*bowing with great respect.*) So will I say ;
I'll own nor word nor will, that can offend you.

Lady. De Monfort is engag'd to grace our feast ;

Ere long you'll see him here.

Jane. I thank you truly, but this homely dress
Suits not the splendour of such scenes as these.

Freb. (*pointing to her dress.*) Such artless and majestic elegance,

So exquisitely just, so nobly simple,
Will make the gorgeous blush.

Jane. (*smiling.*) Nay, nay, be more consistent,
courteous knight,

And do not praise a plain and simple guise
With such profusion of unsimple words.
I cannot join your company to-night.

Lady. Not stay to see your brother ?

Jane Therefore it is I would not, gentle host-
tess.

Here will he find all that can woo the heart
To joy and sweet forgetfulness of pain ;
The sight of me would wake his feeling mind
To other thoughts. I am no doating mistress ;
No fond distracted wife, who must forthwith
Rush to his arms and weep. I am his sister :

The eldest daughter of his father's house :
Calm and unwearied is my love for him ;
And having found him, patiently I'll wait,
Nor greet him in the hour of social joy,
To dash his mirth with tears.—

The night wears on ; permit me to withdraw.

Freb. Nay, do not, do not injure us so far !
Disguise thyself, and join our friendly train.

Jane. You wear not masks to-night.

Lady. We wear not masks, but you may be
conceal'd

Behind the double foldings of a veil.

Jane. (*after pausing to consider.*) In truth, I
feel a little so inclin'd.

Methinks unknown, I e'en might speak to him,
And gently prove the temper of his mind ;
But for the means I must become your debtor.

(*To Lady.*)

Lady. Who waits ? (*Enter her Woman.*) At-
tend this lady to my wardrobe,
And do what she commands you.

[*EXEUNT Jane and Waiting-woman.*]

Freb. (*looking after Jane, as she goes out, with
admiration.*) Oh ! what a soul she bears !
see how she steps !

Nought but the native dignity of worth
E'er taught the moving form such noble grace.

Lady. Such lofty mien, and high assumed gait
I've seen ere now, and men have call'd it pride.

Freb. No, 'faith ! thou never didst, but oft in-
deed

The paltry imitation thou hast seen.

(*Looking at her.*) How hang those trappings on
thy motley gown ?

They seem like garlands on a May-day queen,
Which hinds have dress'd in sport.

(*Lady turns away displeased.*)

Freb. Nay, do not frown ; I spoke it but in haste :
For thou art lovely still in every garb.
But see, the guests assemble.

Enter groups of well-dressed people, who pay their compliments to Freberg and his Lady ; and, followed by her, pass into the inner apartment, where more company appear assembling, as if by another entry.

Freb. (*who remains on the front of the stage with a friend or two.*) How loud the hum of this
gay-meeting crowd !

'Tis like a bee-swarm in the noonday sun.

Music will quell the sound. Who waits without ?

Music strike up.

Music, and when it ceases, enter from the inner apartment REZENVELT, with several gentlemen, all richly dressed.)

Freb. (*to those just entered.*) What, lively gallants,
quit the field so soon ?

Are there no beauties in that moving crowd
To fix your fancy ?

Rez. Ay, marry, are there ! men of ev'ry fancy
May in that moving crowd some fair one find

To suit their taste, tho' whimsical and strange,
As ever fancy own'd.

Beauty of every cast and shade is there,
From the perfection of a faultless form,
Down to the common, brown unnoted maid,
Who looks but pretty in her Sunday gown.

1st Gent. There is, indeed, a gay variety.

Rez. And if the liberality of nature
Suffices not, there 's store of grafted charms,
Blending in one the sweets of many plants,
So obstinately, strangely opposite,
As would have well defy'd all other art
But female cultivation. Aged youth,
With borrow'd locks, in rosy chaplets bound,
Clothes her dim eye, parch'd lips, and skinny cheek
In most unlovely softness :
And youthful age, with fat round trackless face,
The down-cast look of contemplation deep
Most pensively assumes.
Is it not even so ? The native prude,
With forced laugh, and merriment uncouth,
Plays off the wild coquet's successful charms
With most unskilful pains ; and the coquet,
In temporary crust of cold reserve,
Fixes her studied looks upon the ground
Forbiddingly demure.

Freb. Fy ! thou art too severe.

Rez. Say, rather, gentle.
I' faith ! the very dwarfs attempt to charm
With lofty airs of puny majesty ;
Whilst potent damsels, of a portly make,

Totter like nurslings, and demand the aid
Of gentle sympathy.

From all those diverse modes of dire assault,
He owns a heart of hardest adamant,
Who shall escape to-night.

*Freb. (to De Mon. who has entered during
Rezenvelt's speech, and heard the greatest
part of it.)* Ha, ha, ha, ha!

How pleasantly he gives his wit the rein,
Yet guides its wild career!

(De Mon. is silent)

Rez. (smiling archly.) What, think you, Fre-
berg, the same powerful spell
Of transformation reigns o'er all to-night?
Or that De Monfort is a woman turn'd.
So widely from his native self to swerve,
As grace my folly with a smile of his?

De Mon. Nay, think not, Rezenvelt, there is
no smile

I can bestow on thee. There is a smile,
A smile of nature too, which I can spare,
And yet, perhaps, thou wilt not thank me for it.
(Smiles contemptuously.)

Rez. Not thank thee! It were surely most un-
grateful

No thanks to pay for nobly giving me
What, well we see, has cost thee so much pain.
For nature hath her smiles of birth more painful
Than bitt'rest execrations.

Freb. These idle words will lead us to disquiet:
Forbear, forbear, my friends! Go, Rezenvelt,

Accept the challenge of those lovely dames,
Who thro' the portal come with bolder steps
To claim your notice.

(Enter a group of Ladies from the other apartment, who walk slowly across the bottom of the stage, and return to it again. Rez. shrugs up his shoulders, as if unwilling to go.)

1st Gent. (to Rez.) Behold in sable veil a lady
comes,

Whose noble air doth challenge fancy's skill
To suit it with a countenance as goodly.

(Pointing to Jane De Mon. who now enters in a thick black veil.)

Rez. Yes, this way lies attraction. (To Freb.)

With permission (Going up to Jane.)

Fair lady, tho' within that envious shroud
Your beauty deigns not to enlighten us,
We bid you welcome, and our beauties here
Will welcome you the more for such concealment.

With the permission of our noble host —

(Taking her hand, and leading her to the front of the stage.)

Jane. (to Freb.) Pardon me this presumption,
courteous Sir :

I thus appear, (*pointing to her veil.*) not careless
of respect

Unto the generous lady of the feast.
Beneath this veil no beauty shrouded is,
That, now, or pain, or pleasure can bestow.
Within the friendly cover of its shade

I only wish, unknown, again to see
One who, alas ! is heedless of my pain.

De Mon. Yes, it is ever thus. Undo that veil,
And give thy count'nance to the cheerful light.
Men now all soft, and female beauty scorn,
And mock the gentle cares which aim to please.
It is most damnable ! undo thy veil,
And think of him no more.

Jane. I know it well even to a proverb grown,
Is lovers' faith, and I had borne such slight :
But he, who has, alas ! forsaken me,
Was the companion of my early days,
My cradle's mate, mine infant play-fellow.
Within our op'ning minds, with riper years,
The love of praise and gen'rous virtue sprung :
Thro' varied life our pride, our joys were one ;
At the same tale we wept : he is my brother.

De Mon. And he forsook thee ? — No, I dare
not curse him :

My heart upbraids me with a crime like his.

Jane. Ah ! do not thus distress a feeling heart.
All sisters are not to the soul entwin'd
With equal banns ; thine has not watch'd for
thee,

Wept for thee, cheer'd thee, shar'd thy weal and
woe,

As I have done for him.

De Mon. (*eagerly.*) Ah ! has she not ?
By heav'n the sum of all thy kindly deeds
Were but as chaff pois'd against massy gold,
Compar'd to that which I do owe her love.

Oh, pardon me ! I mean not to offend —
I am too warm — but she of whom I speak
Is the dear sister of my earliest love ;
In noble, virtuous worth to none a second :
And tho' behind those sable folds were hid
As fair a face as ever woman own'd,
Still would I say she is as fair as thou.
How oft amidst the beauty-blazing throng,
I've proudly to th' inquiring stranger told
Her name and lineage ! yet within her house,
The virgin mother of an orphan race
Her dying parents left, this noble woman
Did, like a Roman matron proudly sit,
Despising all the blandishments of love ;
Whilst many a youth his hopeless love conceal'd,
Or, humbly distant, woo'd her like a queen.
Forgive, I pray you ! O forgive this boasting !
In faith ! I mean you no discourtesy.

Jane. (off her guard, in a soft natural tone of voice.) Oh, no ! nor do me any.

De Mon. What voice speaks now ? Withdraw,
withdraw this shade !

For if thy face bear semblance to thy voice,
I'll fall and worship thee. Pray ! pray undo !

(Puts forth his hand eagerly to snatch away the veil, whilst she shrinks back, and Rezenvelt steps between to prevent him.)

Rez. Stand off : no hand shall lift this sacred veil.

De Mon. What, dost thou think De Monfort
fall'n so low,

That there may live a man beneath heav'n's roof,
Who dares to say, he shall not?

Rez. He lives who dares to say —

Jane. (*throwing back her veil, much alarmed, and rushes between them.*) Forbear, forbear!

(*Rezenvelt, very much struck, steps back respectfully, and makes her a low bow. De Monfort stands for a while motionless, gazing upon her, till she, looking expressively to him, extends her arms, and he, rushing into them, bursts into tears. Freberg seems very much pleased. The company then advancing from the inner apartment, gather about them, and the Scene closes.*)

SCENE II.

De Monfort's apartments. Enter DE MONFORT, with a disordered air, and his hand pressed upon his forehead, followed by JANE.

De Mon. No more, my sister, urge me not again :

My secret troubles cannot be reveal'd.

From all participation of its thoughts

My heart recoils : I pray thee be contented.

Jane. What, must I, like a distant humble friend,

Observe thy restless eye, and gait disturb'd,

In timid silence, whilst with yearning heart

I turn aside to weep? O no! De Monfort!

A nobler task thy nobler mind will give;

Thy true entrusted friend I still shall be.

De Mon. Ah, Jane, forbear ! I cannot e'en to thee.

Jane. Then, fy upon it ! fy upon it, Monfort !
There was a time when e'en with murder stain'd,
Had it been possible that such dire deed
Could e'er have been the crime of one so piteous,
Thou wouldst have told it me.

De Mon. So would I now — but ask of this no more.

All other trouble but the one I feel
I had disclos'd to thee. I pray thee spare me.
It is the secret weakness of my nature.

Jane. Then secret let it be ; I urge no farther.
The eldest of our valiant father's hopes,
So sadly orphan'd, side by side we stood,
Like two young trees, whose boughs in early
strength

Skreen the weak saplings of the rising grove,
And brave the storm together —
I have so long, as if by nature's right,
Thy bosom's inmate and adviser been,
I thought thro' life I should have so remain'd,
Nor ever known a change. Forgive me, Monfort,
A humbler station will I take by thee :
The close attendant of thy wand'ring steps ;
The cheerer of this home, with strangers sought ;
The scother of those griefs I must not know :
This is mine office now : I ask no more.

De Mon. Oh, Jane ! thou dost constrain me
with thy love !
Would I could tell it thee !

Jane. Thou shalt not tell me. Nay I'll stop
mine ears,

Nor from the yearnings of affection wring
What shrinks from utt'rance. Let it pass, my
brother.

I'll stay by thee ; I'll cheer thee, comfort thee :
Pursue with thee the study of some art,
Or nobler science, that compels the mind
To steady thought progressive, driving forth
All floating, wild, unhappy fantasies ;
Till thou, with brow unclouded, smil'st again ;
Like one who, from dark visions of the night,
When th' active soul within its lifeless cell
Holds its own world, with dreadful fancy press'd
Of some dire, terrible, or murd'rous deed,
Wakes to the dawning morn, and blesses heaven.

De Mon. It will not pass away ; 'twill haunt me
still.

Jane. Ah ! say not so, for I will haunt thee too ;
And be to it so close an adversary,
That, though I wrestle darkling with the fiend,
I shall o'ercome it.

De Mon. Thou most gen'rous woman !
Why do I treat thee thus ? It should not be —
And yet I cannot — O that cursed villain !
He will not let me be the man I would.

Jane. What say'st thou, Monfort ? Oh ! what
words are these ?
They have awak'd my soul to dreadful thoughts.
I do beseech thee, speak !

(*He shakes his head, and turns from her ;
she following him.*)

By the affection thou didst ever bear me ;
By the dear mem'ry of our infant days ;
By kindred living ties, ay, and by those
Who sleep i'the tomb, and cannot call to thee,
I do conjure thee, speak !

*(He waves her off with his hand, and covers
his face with the other, still turning from
her.)*

Ha ! wilt thou not ?

(Assuming dignity.) Then, if affection, most un-
wearied love,

Tried early, long, and never wanting found,
O'er gen'rous man hath more authority,
More rightful power than crown or sceptre give,
I do command thee.

*(He throws himself into a chair, greatly agi-
tated.)*

De Monfort, do not thus resist my love.
Here I entreat thee on my bended knees.

(Kneeling.)

Alas ! my brother !

*(De Monfort starts up, and catching her in
his arms, raises her up, then placing her in
the chair, kneels at her feet.)*

De Mon. Thus let him kneel who should the
abased be,

And at thine honour'd feet confession make.
I'll tell thee all — but, oh ! thou wilt despise me.
For in my breast a raging passion burns,
To which thy soul no sympathy will own —
A passion which hath made my nightly couch
A place of torment ; and the light of day,

With the gay intercourse of social man,
Feel like th' oppressive airless pestilence.
O Jane! thou wilt despise me.

Jane.

Say not so :

I never can despise thee, gentle brother.
A lover's jealousy and hopeless pangs
No kindly heart contemns.

De Mon.

A lover, say'st thou ?

No, it is hate ! black, lasting, deadly hate !
Which thus hath driven me forth from kindred
peace,

From social pleasure, from my native home,
To be a sullen wand'rer on the earth,
Avoiding all men, cursing and accurs'd.

Jane. De Monfort, this is fiend-like, frightful,
terrible !

What being, by th' Almighty Father form'd,
Of flesh and blood, created even as thou,
Could in thy breast such horrid tempest wake,
Who art thyself his fellow ?
Unknit thy brows, and spread those wrath-clench'd
hands.

Some sprite accurs'd within thy bosom mates
To work thy ruin. Strive with it, my brother !
Strive bravely with it ; drive it from thy breast :
'Tis the degrader of a noble heart :
Curse it, and bid it part.

De Mon. It will not part. (*His hand on his
breast.*)

I've lodg'd it here too long :
With my first cares I felt its rankling touch ;

I loath'd him when a boy.

Jane. Who didst thou say?

De Mon. Oh! that detested Rezenvelt!
E'en in our early sports, like two young whelps
Of hostile breed, instinctively reverse,
Each 'gainst the other pitch'd his ready pledge,
And frown'd defiance. As we onward pass'd
From youth to man's estate, his narrow art
And envious gibing malice, poorly veil'd
In the affected carelessness of mirth,
Still more detestable and odious grew.
There is no living being on this earth
Who can conceive the malice of his soul,
With all his gay and damned merriment,
To those, by fortune or by merit plac'd
Above his paltry self. When, low in fortune,
He look'd upon the state of prosp'rous men,
As nightly birds, rous'd from their murky holes,
Do scowl and chatter at the light of day,
I could endure it; even as we bear
Th' impotent bite of some half-trodden worm,
I could endure it. But when honours came,
And wealth and new-got titles fed his pride;
Whilst flatt'ring knaves did trumpet forth his
praise,
And grov'ling idiots grinn'd applauses on him;
Oh! then I could no longer suffer it!
It drove me frantick. — What! what would I
give!
What would I give to crush the bloated toad,
So rankly do I loathe him!

Jane. And would thy hatred crush the very man
Who gave to thee that life he might have ta'en ?
That life which thou so rashly didst expose
To aim at his ? Oh ! this is horrible !

De Mon. Ha ! thou hast heard it, then ? From
all the world,
But most of all from thee, I thought it hid.

Jane. I heard a secret whisper, and resolv'd
Upon the instant to return to thee.
Didst thou receive my letter ?

De Mon. I did ! I did ! 'twas that which drove
me hither.

I could not bear to meet thine eye again.

Jane. Alas ! that, tempted by a sister's tears,
I ever left thy house ! These few past months,
These absent months, have brought us all this woe.
Had I remain'd with thee it had not been.
And yet, methinks, it should not move you thus.
You dar'd him to the field ; both bravely fought ;
He more adroit disarm'd you ; courteously
Return'd the forfeit sword, which, so return'd,
You did refuse to use against him more ;
And then, as says report, you parted friends.

De Mon. When he disarm'd this curs'd, this
worthless hand

Of its most worthless weapon, he but spar'd
From dev'lish pride, which now derives a bliss
In seeing me thus fetter'd, sham'd, subjected
With the vile favour of his poor forbearance ;
Whilst he securely sits with gibing brow,
And basely bates me like a muzzled cur

Who cannot turn again. —

Until that day, till that accursed day,
I knew not half the torment of this hell,
Which burns within my breast. Heaven's light-
nings blast him !

Jane. O this is horrible ! Forbear, forbear !
Lest heaven's vengeance light upon thy head,
For this most impious wish.

De Mon. Then let it light.
Torments more fell than I have felt already
It cannot send. To be annihilated,
What all men shrink from ; to be dust, be no-
thing,

Were bliss to me, compar'd to what I am !

Jane. Oh ! wouldst thou kill me with these
dreadful words ?

De Mon. (*raising his hands to heaven.*) Let me
but once upon his ruin look,
Then close mine eyes for ever !

(*Jane, in great distress, staggers back, and
supports herself upon the side scene. De
Mon. alarmed, runs up to her with a soft-
ened voice.*)

Ha ! how is this ? thou'rt ill ; thou'rt very pale.

What have I done to thee ? Alas, alas !

I meant not to distress thee. — O my sister !

Jane. (*shaking her head.*) I cannot speak to
thee.

De Mon. I have kill'd thee.
Turn, turn thee not away ! look on me still !

Oh ! droop not thus, my life, my pride, my
sister ;

Look on me yet again.

Jane. Thou too, De Monfort,
In better days, were wont to be my pride.

De Mon. I am a wretch, most wretched in
myself,

And still more wretched in the pain I give.

O curse that villain ! that detested villain !

He has spread mis'ry o'er my fated life :

He will undo us all.

Jane. I've held my warfare through a troubled
world,

And borne with steady mind my share of ill ;

For then the helpmate of my toil wert thou.

But now the wane of life comes darkly on,

And hideous passion tears me from my heart,

Blasting thy worth. — I cannot strive with this.

De Mon. (*affectionately.*) What shall I do ?

Jane. Call up thy noble spirit ;
Rouse all the gen'rous energy of virtue ;

And with the strength of heaven-endued man,

Repel the hideous foe. Be great ; be valiant.

O, if thou couldst ! e'en shrouded as thou art

In all the sad infirmities of nature,

What a most noble creature wouldst thou be !

De Mon. Ay, if I could : alas ! alas ! I cannot.

Jane. Thou canst, thou mayst, thou wilt.
We shall not part till I have turn'd thy soul.

Enter MANUEL.

De Mon. Ha! some one enters. Wherefore com'st thou here?

Man. Count Freberg waits your leisure.

De Mon. (*angrily.*) Begone, begone! — I cannot see him now. [EXIT MANUEL.

Jane. Come to my closet; free from all intrusion,

I'll school thee there; and thou again shalt be
My willing pupil, and my gen'rous friend,
The noble Monfort I have lov'd so long,
And must not, will not lose.

De Mon. Do as thou wilt; I will not grieve thee more. [EXEUNT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.* — *Countess FREBERG's Dressing-room.*

Enter the Countess dispirited and out of humour, and throws herself into a chair: enter, by the opposite side, THERESA.

Ther. Madam, I am afraid you are unwell: What is the matter? does your head ache?

Lady. (*peevishly.*) No,

* This scene has been very much altered from what it was in the former editions of this play, and scene fifth of the last act will be found to be almost entirely changed. These alterations, though of no great importance, are, I hope, upon the whole, improvements.

'Tis not my head : concern thyself no more
With what concerns not thee.

Ther. Go you abroad to-night ?

Lady. Yes, thinkest thou I'll stay and fret at
home ?

Ther. Then please to say what you would
choose to wear : —

One of your newest robes ?

Lady. I hate them all.

Ther. Surely that purple scarf became you well,
With all those wreaths of richly-hanging flowers.
Did I not overhear them say, last night,
As from the crowded ball-room ladies past,
How gay and handsome, in her costly dress,
The Countess Freberg look'd ?

Lady. Didst thou o'erhear it ?

Ther. I did, and more than this.

Lady. Well, all are not so greatly prejudic'd ;
All do not think me like a May-day queen,
Which peasants deck in sport.

Ther. And who said this ?

Lady. (*putting her handkerchief to her eyes.*)
E'en my good lord, Theresa.

Ther. He said it but in jest. He loves you well.

Lady. I know as well as thou he loves me well.
But what of that ! he takes in me no pride :
Elsewhere his praise and admiration go,
And Jane De Monfort is not mortal woman.

Ther. The wondrous character this lady bears
For worth and excellence : from early youth
The friend and mother of her younger sisters,

Now greatly married, as I have been told,
From her most prudent care, may well excuse
The admiration of so good a man
As my good master is. And then, dear Madam,
I must confess, when I myself did hear
How she was come thro' the rough winter's storm,
To seek and comfort an unhappy brother,
My heart beat kindly to her.

Lady. Ay, ay, there is a charm in this I find :
But wherefore may she not have come as well
Through wintry storms to seek a lover too ?

Ther. No, Madam, no, I could not think of this.

Lady. That would reduce her in your eyes,
mayhap,

To woman's level. — Now I see my vengeance !
I'll tell it round that she is hither come,
Under pretence of finding out De Monfort,
To meet with Rezenvelt. When Freberg hears it,
'Twill help, I ween, to break this magick charm.

Ther. And say what is not, Madam ?

Lady. How canst thou know that I shall say
what is not ?

'Tis like enough I shall but speak the truth.

Ther. Ah, no ! there is —

Lady. Well, hold thy foolish tongue.
(*Freberg's voice is heard without. After hesitating.*)
I will not see him now. [EXIT.

(*Enter Freberg by the opposite side, passing
on hastily.*)

Ther. Pardon, my Lord ; I fear you are in haste.
Yet must I crave that you will give to me

The books my Lady mention'd to you : she
Has charg'd me to remind you.

Freb. I'm in haste. (*passing on.*)

Ther. Pray you, my Lord : your Countess wants
them much ;

The Lady Jane De Monfort ask'd them of her.

Freb. (*returning instantly.*) Are they for her ?

I knew not this before.

I will, then, search them out immediately.

There is nought good or precious in my keeping,
That is not dearly honour'd by her use.

Ther. My Lord, what would your gentle
Countess say

If she o'erheard her own request neglected,
Until supported by a name more potent ?

Freb. Think'st thou she is a fool, my good
Theresa,

Vainly to please herself with childish thoughts
Of matching what is matchless — Jane De Mon-
fort ?

Think'st thou she is a fool, and cannot see,
That love and admiration often thrive
Tho' far apart ?

(*Re-enter LADY with great violence.*)

Lady. I am a fool, not to have seen full well,
That thy best pleasure in o'er-rating so
This lofty stranger, is to humble me,
And cast a dark'ning shadow o'er my head.
Ay, wherefore dost thou stare upon me thus ?
Art thou asham'd that I have thus surpris'd thee ?
Well mayst thou be so !

Freb. True ; thou rightly say'st.
 Well may I be asham'd : not for the praise
 Which I have ever openly bestow'd
 On Monfort's noble sister ; but that thus,
 Like a poor mean and jealous listener,
 She should be found, who is Count Freberg's wife.

Lady. Oh, I am lost and ruin'd ! hated, scorn'd !
(pretending to faint.)

Freb. Alas, I have been too rough !
(taking her hand and kissing it tenderly.)
 My gentle love ! my own, my only love !
 See, she revives again. How art thou, love ?
 Support her to her chamber, good Theresa.
 I'll sit and watch by her. I've been too rough.
 [EXEUNT : *Lady supported by Freb. and Ther.*

SCENE II.

DE MONFORT *discovered sitting by a table reading.*
After a little time he lays down his book, and
continues in a thoughtful posture. Enter to him
 JANE DE MONFORT.

Jane. Thanks, gentle brother. —

(Pointing to the book:)

Thy willing mind has rightly been employ'd :
 Did not thy heart warm at the fair display
 Of peace and concord and forgiving love ?

De Mon. I know resentment may to love be
 turn'd ;

Tho' keen and lasting, into love as strong :
 And fiercest rivals in th' ensanguin'd field
 Have cast their brandish'd weapons to the ground,

De Mon. Alas ! I cannot now so school my
mind

As holy men have taught, nor search it truly :
But this, my Jane, I'll do for love of thee ;
And more it is than crowns could win me to,
Or any power but thine. I'll see the man.
Th' indignant risings of abhorrent nature ;
The stern contraction of my scowling brows,
That like the plant whose closing leaves do shrink
At hostile touch, still knit at his approach ;
The crooked curving lip, by instinct taught,
In imitation of disgustful things,
To pout and swell, I strictly will repress ;
And meet him with a tamed countenance,
E'en as a townsman, who would live at peace,
And pay him the respect his station claims.
I'll crave his pardon too for all offence
My dark and wayward temper may have done.
Nay more, I will confess myself his debtor
For the forbearance I have curs'd so oft :
Life spar'd by him, more horrid than the grave
With all its dark corruption ! This I'll do.
Will it suffice thee ? More than this I cannot.

Jane. No more than this do I require of thee
In outward act, tho' in thy heart, my friend,
I hop'd a better change, and still will hope.
I told thee Freberg had propos'd a meeting.

De Mon. I know it well.

Jane. And Rezenvelt consents.
He meets you here ; so far he shows respect.

De Mon. Well, let it be ; the sooner past the better.

Jane. I'm glad to hear you say so, for, in truth, He has propos'd for it an early hour.

'Tis almost near his time ; I came to tell you.

De Mon. What, comes he here so soon ? shame on his speed !

It is not decent thus to rush upon me.

He loves the secret pleasure he will feel

To see me thus subdu'd.

Jane. O say not so ! he comes with heart sincere.

De Mon. Could we not meet elsewhere ? from home — i' the fields,

Where other men — must I alone receive him ?

Where is your agent, Freberg, and his friends,

That I must meet him here ?

(*Walks up and down very much disturbed.*)

Now ! didst thou say ? — how goes the hour ? — e'en now !

I would some other friend were first arriv'd.

Jane. See, to thy wish come Freberg and his dame.

De Mon. His lady too ! why comes he not alone ?

Must all the world stare upon our meeting ?

Enter COUNT FREBERG and his Countess.

Freb. A happy morrow to my noble marquis And his most noble sister !

Jane. Gen'rous Freberg,
Your face, methinks, forebodes a happy morn,

Open and cheerful. What of Rezenvelt?

Freb. I left him at his home, prepar'd to follow:
He'll soon appear. (*To De Monfort.*) And now,
my worthy friend,
Give me your hand; this happy change delights
me.

(*De Monfort gives him his hand coldly, and they walk to the bottom of the stage together, in earnest discourse, whilst Jane and the Countess remain in the front.*)

Lady. My dearest Madam, will you pardon me?
I know Count Freberg's bus'ness with De Monfort,
And had a strong desire to visit you,
So much I wish the honour of your friendship;
For he retains no secret from mine ear.

Jane. (*archly.*) Knowing your prudence — You
are welcome, Madam;
So shall Count Freberg's lady ever be.

(*De Monfort and Freberg, returning towards the front of the stage, still engaged in discourse.*)

Freb. He is indeed a man, within whose breast
Firm rectitude and honour hold their seat,
Tho' unadorned with that dignity
Which were their fittest garb. Now, on my life!
I know no truer heart than Rezenvelt.

De Mon. Well, Freberg, well, there needs not
all this pains
To garnish out his worth: let it suffice;
I am resolv'd I will respect the man,
As his fair station and repute demand.

Methinks I see not at your jolly feasts
The youthful knight, who sung so pleasantly.

Freb. A pleasant circumstance detains him
hence ;

Pleasant to those who love high gen'rous deeds
Above the middle pitch of common minds ;
And, tho' I have been sworn to secrecy,
Yet must I tell it thee.

This knight is near akin to Rezenvelt,
To whom an old relation, short while dead,
A good estate bequeathed, some leagues distant.
But Rezenvelt, now rich in fortune's store,
Disdain'd the sordid love of further gain,
And gen'rously the rich bequest resign'd
To this young man, blood of the same degree
To the deceas'd, and low in fortune's gifts,
Who is from hence to take possession of it :
Was it not nobly done ?

De Mon. 'Twas right and honourable.
This morning is oppressive, warm, and heavy :
There hangs a foggy closeness in the air ;
Dost thou not feel it ?

Freb. O no ! to think upon a gen'rous deed
Expands my soul, and makes me lightly breathe.

De Mon. Who gives the feast to-night ? His
name escapes me.

You say I am invited.

Freb. Old Count Waterlan.
In honour of your townsman's gen'rous gift,
He spreads the board.

De Mon. He is too old to revel with the gay.

Freb. But not too old is he to honour virtue.
 I shall partake of it with open soul ;
 For, on my honest faith, of living men
 I know not one, for talents, honour, worth,
 That I should rank superior to Rezenvelt.

De Mon. How virtuous he hath been in three
 short days !

Freb. Nay, longer, Marquis; but my friendship
 rests

Upon the good report of other men,
 And that has told me much.

*(De Monfort aside, going some steps hastily
 from Freberg, and rending his cloak with
 agitation as he goes.)*

Would he were come! by heav'n I would he were!
 This fool besets me so.

*(Suddenly correcting himself, and joining the
 Ladies, who have retired to the bottom of the
 stage, he speaks to Countess Freberg with
 affected cheerfulness.)*

The sprightly dames of Amberg rise by times,
 Untarnish'd with the vigils of the night.

Lady. Praise us not rashly, 'tis not always so.

De Mon. He does not rashly praise who praises
 you ;

For he were dull indeed —

(Stopping short, as if he heard something.)

Lady. How dull indeed ?

De Mon. I should have said—It has escap'd me
 now —

(Listening again, as if he heard something.)

Jane. (to De Mon.) What, hear you aught?

De Mon. (*hastily.*) 'Tis nothing.

Lady. (to De Mon.) Nay, do not let me lose it
so, my Lord.

Some fair one has bewitch'd your memory,
And robs me of the half-form'd compliment.

Jane. Half-utter'd praise is to the curious mind
As to the eye half-veiled beauty is,
More precious than the whole. Pray pardon him.
Some one approaches. (*Listening.*)

Freb. No, no, it is a servant who ascends;
He will not come so soon.

De Mon. (*off his guard.*) 'Tis Rezenvelt: I
heard his well-known foot,
From the first staircase, mounting step by step.

Freb. How quick an ear thou hast for distant
sound?

I heard him not.

(De Monfort looks embarrassed, and is silent.)

Enter REZENVELT.

(De Monfort, recovering himself, goes up to
receive Rezenvelt, who meets him with a
cheerful countenance.)

De Mon. (to Rez.) I am, my Lord, beholden to
you greatly.

This ready visit makes me much your debtor.

Rez. Then may such debts between us, noble
Marquis,

Be oft incurr'd, and often paid again!

(To Jane.) Madam, I am devoted to your service,

And ev'ry wish of yours commands my will.

(*To Countess.*) Lady, good morning. (*To Freb.*)

Well, my gentle friend,

You see I have not linger'd long behind.

Freb. No, thou art sooner than I look'd for thee.

Rez. A willing heart adds feather to the heel,
And makes the clown a winged Mercury.

De Mon. Then let me say, that, with a grateful mind,

I do receive these tokens of good will ;

And must regret, that, in my wayward moods,

I have too oft forgot the due regard

Your rank and talents claim.

Rez.

No, no, De Monfort,

You have but rightly curb'd a wanton spirit,

Which makes me too neglectful of respect.

Let us be friends, and think of this no more.

Freb. Ay, let it rest with the departed shades

Of things which are no more ; whilst lovely concord,

Follow'd by friendship sweet, and firm esteem,

Your future days enrich. O heavenly friendship!

Thou dost exalt the sluggish souls of men,

By thee conjoin'd, to great and glorious deeds ;

As two dark clouds, when mix'd in middle air,

The vivid lightning's flash, and roar sublime.

Talk not of what is past, but future love.

De Mon. (*with dignity.*) No, Freberg, no, it

must not. (*To Rezenvelt.*) No, my Lord,

I will not offer you an hand of concord,

And poorly hide the motives which constrain me,

I would that, not alone, these present friends,
But ev'ry soul in Amberg were assembled,
That I, before them all, might here declare
I owe my spared life to your forbearance.
(*Holding out his hand.*) Take this from one who
boasts no feeling warmth,
But never will deceive.

(*Jane smiles upon De Monfort with great
approbation, and Rezenvelt runs up to him
with open arms.*)

Rez. Away with hands ! I'll have thee to my
breast.

Thou art, upon my faith, a noble spirit !

De Mon. (*shrinking back from him.*) Nay, if
you please, I am not so prepar'd —

My nature is of temperature too cold —

I pray you pardon me. (*Jane's countenance changes.*)

But take this hand, the token of respect ;

The token of a will inclin'd to concord ;

The token of a mind, that bears within

A sense impressive of the debt it owes you :

And cursed be its power, unnerv'd its strength,

If e'er again it shall be lifted up

To do you any harm !

Rez. Well, be it so, De Monfort, I'm contented ;
I'll take thy hand since I can have no more.

(*Carelessly.*) I take of worthy men whate'er they
give.

Their heart I gladly take, if not their hand ;

If that too is withheld, a courteous word,

Or the civility of placid looks :

And, if e'en these are too great favours deem'd,
'Faith, I can set me down contentedly
With plain and homely greeting, or "God
save ye!"

De Mon. (aside, starting away from him some paces.)

By the good light, he makes a jest of it!

(Jane seems greatly distressed, and Freberg endeavours to cheer her.)

Freb. (to Jane.) Cheer up, my noble friend; all
will go well;

For friendship is no plant of hasty growth.
Tho' rooted in esteem's deep soil, the slow
And gradual culture of kind intercourse
Must bring it to perfection.

(To the Countess.) My love, the morning, now,
is far advanc'd;

Our friends elsewhere expect us; take your leave.

Lady. (to Jane.) Farewell, dear Madam, till
the ev'ning hour.

Freb. (to De Mon.) Good day, De Monfort. *(To Jane.)* Most devoutly yours.

Rez. (to Freb.) Go not too fast, for I will follow you.

[EXEUNT Freberg and his Lady.]

(To Jane.) The Lady Jane is yet a stranger here:
She might, perhaps, in this your ancient city
Find somewhat worth her notice.

Jane. I thank you, Marquis, I am much engag'd;
I go not out to-day.

Rez. Then fare ye well! I see I cannot now

Be the proud man who shall escort you forth,
And shew to all the world my proudest boast,
The notice and respect of Jane De Monfort.

De Mon. (aside impatiently.) He says farewell,
and goes not !

Jane. (to Rez.) You do me honour.

Rez. Madam, adieu ! (To Jane.) Good morn-
ing, noble Marquis. [EXIT.

*(Jane and De Monfort look expressively to
one another, without speaking, and then
EXEUNT severally.)*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Hall or Ante-chamber, with the
folding doors of an inner apartment open, which
discovers the guests rising from a banquet. They
enter and pass over the stage, and EXEUNT; and
after them enter REZENVELT and FREBERG.*

Freb. Alas, my Rezenvelt !

I vainly hop'd the hand of gentle peace,
From this day's reconciliation sprung,
These rude unseemly jarrings had subdu'd ;
But I have mark'd, e'en at the social board,
Such looks, such words, such tones, such untold
things,
Too plainly told, 'twixt you and Monfort pass,
That I must now despair.
Yet who could think, two minds so much refin'd,

So near in excellence, should be remov'd,
So far remov'd, in gen'rous sympathy ?

Rez. Ay, far remov'd indeed !

Freb. And yet, methought, he made a noble
effort,

And with a manly plainness bravely told
The galling debt he owes to your forbearance.

Rez. 'Faith ! so he did, and so did I receive it ;
When, with spread arms, and heart e'en mov'd to
tears,

I frankly proffer'd him a friend's embrace :
And, I declare, had he as such receiv'd it,
I from that very moment had forborne
All opposition, pride-provoking jest,
Contemning carelessness, and all offence ;
And had caress'd him as a worthy heart,
From native weakness such indulgence claiming.
But since he proudly thinks that cold respect,
The formal tokens of his lordly favour,
So precious are, that I would sue for them
As fair distinction in the publick eye,
Forgetting former wrongs, I spurn it all.
And but that I do bear that noble woman,
His worthy, his incomparable sister,
Such fix'd profound regard, I would expose him ;
And as a mighty bull, in senseless rage,
Rous'd at the baiter's will, with wretched rags
Of ire-provoking scarlet, chafes and bellows,
I'd make him at small cost of paltry wit,
With all his deep and manly faculties,
The scorn and laugh of fools.

Freb. For heaven's sake, my friend, restrain
your wrath !

For what has Monfort done of wrong to you,
Or you to him, bating one foolish quarrel,
Which you confess from slight occasion rose,
That in your breasts such dark resentment dwells,
So fix'd, so hopeless ?

Rez. O ! from our youth he has distinguish'd
me

With ev'ry mark of hatred and disgust.
For e'en in boyish sports I still oppos'd
His proud pretensions to pre-eminence ;
Nor would I to his ripen'd greatness give
That fulsome adulation of applause
A senseless crowd bestow'd. Tho' poor in fortune,
I still would smile at vain assuming wealth :
But when unlook'd-for fate on me bestow'd
Riches and splendour equal to his own,
Tho' I, in truth, despise such poor distinction,
Feeling inclin'd to be at peace with him,
And with all men besides, I curb'd my spirit,
And sought to soothe him. Then, with spiteful
rage,

From small offence he rear'd a quarrel with me,
And dar'd me to the field. The rest you know.
In short, I still have been th' opposing rock,
O'er which the stream of his o'erflowing pride
Hath foam'd and fretted. See'st thou how it is ?

Freb. Too well I see, and warn thee to beware,
Such streams have oft, by swelling floods sur-
charg'd,

Borne down, with sudden and impetuous force,
The yet unshaken stone of opposition,
Which had for ages stopp'd their flowing course.
I pray thee, friend, beware.

Rez. Thou canst not mean—he will not murder me?

Freb. What a proud heart, with such dark passion toss'd,
May, in the anguish of its thoughts, conceive,
I will not dare to say.

Rez. Ha ha ! thou know'st him not.
Full often have I mark'd it in his youth,
And could have almost lov'd him for the weakness :

He's form'd with such antipathy, by nature,
To all infliction of corporeal pain,
To wounding life, e'en to the sight of blood,
He cannot if he would.

Freb. Then fye upon thee !
It is not gen'rous to provoke him thus.
But let us part : we'll talk of this again.
Something approaches.—We are here too long.

Rez. Well, then, to-morrow I'll attend your call.

Here lies my way. Good night. [EXIT.

Enter CONRAD.

Con. Forgive, I pray, my Lord, a stranger's boldness.
I have presum'd to wait your leisure here,
Though at so late an hour.

Freb. But who art thou?

Con. My name is Conrad, Sir,
A humble suitor to your honour's goodness,
Who is the more embolden'd to presume,
In that De Monfort's brave and noble Marquis
Is so much fam'd for good and gen'rous deeds.

Freb. You are mistaken, I am not the man.

Con. Then, pardon me : I thought I could
not err ;
That mien so dignified, that piercing eye
Assur'd me it was he.

Freb. My name is not De Monfort, courteous
stranger ;
But, if you have a favour to request,
I may, with him, perhaps, befriend your suit.

Con. I thank your honour, but I have a friend
Who will commend me to De Monfort's favour :
The Marquis Rezenvelt has known me long,
Who, says report, will soon become his brother.

Freb. If thou would'st seek thy ruin from De
Monfort,
The name of Rezenvelt employ, and prosper ;
But, if aught good, use any name but his.

Con. How may this be ?

Freb. I cannot now explain.
Early to-morrow call upon Count Freberg ;
So am I call'd, each burgher knows my house,
And there instruct me how to do you service.
Good-night.

[EXIT.]

Con. (*alone.*) Well, this mistake may be of
service to me :

And yet my bus'ness I will not unfold
 To this mild, ready, promise-making courtier ;
 I've been by such too oft deceiv'd already.
 But if such violent enmity exists
 Between De Monfort and this Rezenvelt,
 He'll prove my advocate by opposition.
 For if De Monfort would reject my suit,
 Being the man whom Rezenvelt esteems,
 Being the man he hates, a cord as strong,
 Will he not favour me ? I'll think of this.

[EXIT.]

SCENE II.

A lower Apartment in JEROME's House, with a wide folding glass door, looking into a garden, where the trees and shrubs are brown and leafless. Enter DE MONFORT with a thoughtful frowning aspect, and paces slowly across the stage, Jerome following behind him, with a timid step. De Monfort hearing him, turns suddenly about.

De Mon. (angrily.) Who follows me to this sequester'd room ?

Jer. I have presum'd, my Lord. 'Tis somewhat late :

I am inform'd you eat at home to-night ;
 Here is a list of all the dainty fare
 My busy search has found ; please to peruse it.

De Mon. Leave me : begone ! Put hemlock in thy soup,
 Or deadly night-shade, or rank hellebore,

And I will mess upon it.

Jer. Heaven forbid!

Your honour's life is all too precious, sure —

De Mon. (*sternly.*) Did I not say begone?

Jer. Pardon, my Lord, I'm old, and oft forget.

[EXIT.

De Mon. (*looking after him, as if his heart smote him.*) Why will they thus mistime their foolish zeal,

That I must be so stern?

O, that I were upon some desert coast!

Where howling tempests and the lashing tide

Would stun me into deep and senseless quiet;

As the storm-beaten trav'ler droops his head,

In heavy, dull, lethargick weariness,

And, 'midst the roar of jarring elements,

Sleeps to awake no more.

What am I grown? all things are hateful to me.

Enter MANUEL.

(*stamping with his foot.*) Who bids thee break upon my privacy?

Man. Nay, good my Lord! I heard you speak aloud,

And dreamt not, surely, that you were alone.

De Mon. What, dost thou watch, and pin thine ears to holes,

To catch those exclamations of the soul,

Which heaven alone should hear? Who hir'd thee, pray?

Who basely hir'd thee for a task like this?

Man. My Lord, I cannot hold. For fifteen years,
Long-troubled years, I have your servant been,
Nor hath the proudest lord in all the realm,
With firmer, with more honourable faith
His sov'reign serv'd, than I have served you ;
But if my honesty is doubted now,
Let him who is more faithful take my place,
And serve you better.

De Mon. Well, be it as thou wilt. Away with
thee !

Thy loud-mouth'd boasting is no rule for me
To judge thy merit by.

Enter JEROME hastily, and pulls MANUEL away.

Jer. Come, Manuel, come away ; thou art not
wise.

The stranger must depart and come again,
For now his honour will not be disturb'd.

[EXIT Manuel *sulkily*.

De Mon. A stranger said'st thou ?

(*Drops his handkerchief.*)

Jer. I did, good Sir, but he shall go away ;
You shall not be disturb'd.

(*Stooping to lift the handkerchief.*)

You have dropp'd somewhat.

De Mon. (*preventing him.*) Nay, do not stoop,
my friend ! I pray thee not !

Thou art too old to stoop. —

I'm much indebted to thee. — Take this ring —
I love thee better than I seem to do.

I pray thee do it — thank me not. — What stranger ?

Jer. A man who does most earnestly entreat
To see your honour ; but I know him not.

De Mon. Then let him enter. [EXIT Jerome.

A pause. Enter CONRAD.

De Mon. You are the stranger who would speak
with me ?

Con. I am so far unfortunate, my Lord,
That, though my fortune on your favour hangs,
I am to you a stranger.

De Mon. How may this be ? What can I do for
you ?

Con. Since thus your Lordship does so frankly
ask,

The tiresome preface of apology
I will forbear, and tell my tale at once. —
In plodding drudgery I've spent my youth,
A careful penman in another's office ;
And now, my master and employer dead,
They seek to set a stripling o'er my head,
And leave me on to drudge, e'en to old age,
Because I have no friend to take my part.
It is an office in your native town,
For I am come from thence, and I am told
You can procure it for me. Thus, my Lord,
From the repute of goodness which you bear,
I have presum'd to beg.

De Mon. They have befool'd thee with a false
report.

Con. Alas ! I see it is in vain to plead.
Your mind is prepossess'd against a wretch,
Who has, unfortunately for his weal,

Offended the revengeful Rezenvelt.

De Mon. What dost thou say ?

Con. What I, perhaps, had better leave unsaid.
Who will believe my wrongs if I complain ?
I am a stranger, Rezenvelt my foe,
Who will believe my wrongs ?

De Mon. (*eagerly catching him by the coat.*)

I will believe them !

Though they were base as basest, vilest deeds,
In ancient record told, I would believe them !
Let not the smallest atom of unworthiness
That he has put upon thee be conceal'd.
Speak boldly, tell it all ; for, by the light !
I'll be thy friend, I'll be thy warmest friend,
If he has done thee wrong.

Con. Nay, pardon me, it were not well advis'd,

If I should speak so freely of the man
Who will so soon your nearest kinsman be.

De Mon. What canst thou mean by this ?

Con. That Marquis Rezenvelt
Has pledg'd his faith unto your noble sister,
And soon will be the husband of her choice.
So I am told, and so the world believes.

De Mon. 'Tis false ! 'tis basely false !
What wretch could drop from his envenom'd
tongue

A tale so damn'd ?—It chokes my breath —

(*stamping with his foot.*) What wretch did tell
it thee ?

Con. Nay, every one with whom I have convers'd

Has held the same discourse. I judge it not.
 But you, my Lord, who with the lady dwell,
 You best can tell what her deportment speaks;
 Whether her conduct and unguarded words
 Belie such rumour.

(*De Monfort pauses, staggers backwards, and
 sinks into a chair; then starting up hastily.*)

De Mon. Where am I now? 'midst all the
 cursed thoughts,

That on my soul like stinging scorpions prey'd,
 This never came before — Oh, if it be!
 The thought will drive me mad. — Was it for this
 She urg'd her warm request on bended knee?
 Alas! I wept, and thought of sister's love,
 No damned love like this.

Fell devil! 'tis hell itself has lent thee aid
 To work such sorcery! (*Pauses.*) I'll not believe
 it,

I must have proof clear as the noon-day sun
 For such foul charge as this! Who waits without?
 (*Paces up and down, furiously agitated.*)

Con. (*aside.*) What have I done? I've carried
 this too far.

I've rous'd a fierce ungovernable madman.

Enter JEROME.

De Mon. (*in a loud angry voice.*) Where did
 she go, at such an early hour,
 And with such slight attendance?

Jer. Of whom inquires your honour?

De Mon. Why, of your lady. Said I not my sister ?

Jer. The Lady Jane, your sister ?

De Mon. (*in a faltering voice.*) Yes, I did call her so.

Jer. In truth, I cannot tell you where she went. E'en now, from the short beechen walk hard-by, I saw her through the garden-gate return. The Marquis Rezenvelt, and Freberg's Countess, Are in her company. This way they come, As being nearer to the back apartments ; But I shall stop them if it be your will, And bid them enter here.

De Mon. No, stop them not. I will remain unseen, And mark them as they pass. Draw back a little.

(*Conrad seems alarmed, and steals off unnoticed.*

De Monfort grasps Jerome tightly by the hand, and drawing back with him two or three steps, not to be seen from the garden, waits in silence, with his eyes fixed on the glass door.)

De Mon. I hear their footsteps on the grating sand :

How like the croaking of a carrion bird,
That hateful voice sounds to the distant ear !
And now she speaks — her voice sounds cheerly
too —

Curs'd be their mirth ! —

Now, now, they come ; keep closer still ! keep steady !

(*Taking hold of Jerome with both hands.*)

Jer. My lord, you tremble much.

De Mon. What, do I shake?

Jer. You do, in truth, and your teeth chatter too.

De Mon. See! see they come! he strutting by her side.

(Jane, Rezenvelt, and Countess Freberg appear through the glass door, pursuing their way up a short walk leading to the other wing of the house.)

See, his audacious face he turns to hers;

Utt'ring with confidence some nauseous jest.

And she endures it too — Oh! this looks vilely!

Ha! mark that courteous motion of his arm! —

What does he mean? — he dares not take her hand!

(Pauses and looks eagerly.) By heaven and hell he does!

(Letting go his hold of Jerome, he throws out his hands vehemently, and thereby pushes him against the scene.)

Jer. Oh! I am stunn'd! my head is crack'd in twain:

Your honour does forget how old I am.

De Mon. Well, well, the wall is harder than I wist.

Begone, and whine within.

[EXIT Jerome, with a sad rueful countenance.

(De Monfort comes forward to the front of the stage, and makes a long pause, expressive of great agony of mind.)

It must be so : each passing circumstance ;
Her hasty journey here ; her keen distress
Whene'er my soul's abhorrence I express'd ;
Ay, and that damned reconciliation,
With tears extorted from me : Oh, too well !
All, all too well bespeak the shameful tale.
I should have thought of heaven and hell conjoin'd,
The morning star mix'd with infernal fire,
Ere I had thought of this —
Hell's blackest magic, in the midnight hour,
With horrid spells and incantation dire,
Such combination opposite, unseemly,
Of fair and loathsome, excellent and base,
Did ne'er produce — But every thing is possible,
So as it may my misery enhance !
Oh ! I did love her with such pride of soul !
When other men, in gay pursuit of love,
Each beauty follow'd, by her side I stay'd ;
Far prouder of a brother's station there,
Than all the favours favour'd lovers boast.
We quarrell'd once, and when I could no more
The alter'd coldness of her eye endure,
I slipp'd o'tip-toe to her chamber-door ;
And when she ask'd who gently knock'd — Oh ! oh !
Who could have thought of this ?

*(Throws himself into a chair, covers his face
with his hand, and bursts into tears. After
some time, he starts up from his seat furi-
ously.)*

Hell's direst torment seize the infernal villain !
Detested of my soul ! I will have vengeance !

I'll crush thy swelling pride — I'll still thy vaunting —

I'll do a deed of blood! — Why shrink I thus?

If by some spell or magic sympathy,

Piercing the lifeless figure on that wall

Could pierce his bosom too, would I not cast it?

(Throwing a dagger against the wall.)

Shall groans and blood affright me? No, I'll do it.

Tho' gasping life beneath my pressure heav'd,

And my soul shudder'd at the horrid brink,

I would not flinch. — Fye, this recoiling nature!

O that his sever'd limbs were strew'd in air,

So as I saw it not!

(Enter Rezenvelt behind from the glass door.

De Monfort turns round, and on seeing him starts back, then drawing his sword, rushes furiously upon him.)

Detested robber! now all forms are over;

Now open villainy, now open hate!

Defend thy life!

Rez. De Monfort, thou art mad.

De Mon. Speak not, but draw. Now for thy hated life!

(They fight: Rezenvelt parries his thrusts with great skill, and at last disarms him.)

Then take my life, black fiend, for hell assists thee.

Rez. No, Monfort, but I'll take away your sword,

Not as a mark of disrespect to you,

But for your safety. By to-morrow's eve

I'll call on you myself and give it back ;
And then, if I am charg'd with any wrong,
I'll justify myself. Farewell, strange man !

[EXIT.

(De Monfort stands for some time quite motionless, like one stupified. Enters to him a SERVANT : he starts.)

De Mon. Ha ! who art thou ?

Ser. 'Tis I, an' please your honour.

De Mon. (staring wildly at him.) Who art thou ?

Ser. Your servant Jacques.

De Mon. Indeed I knew thee not.
Leave me, and when Rezenvelt is gone,
Return and let me know.

Ser. He's gone already.

De Mon. How ! is he gone so soon ?

Ser. His servant told me,
He was in haste to go ; as night comes on,
And at the evening hour he purposes
To visit some old friend, whose lonely mansion
Stands a short mile beyond the farther wood,
In which a convent is of holy Nuns
Who chaunt this night a requiem to the soul
Of a departed sister. For so well
He loves such solemn music, he has order'd
His horses onward by the usual road,
Meaning on foot to cross the wood alone.
So says his knave. Good may it do him, sooth !
I would not walk thro' those wild dells alone
For all his wealth. For there, as I have heard,
Foul murders have been done, and ravens scream ;

And things unearthly, stalking thro' the night,
Have scar'd the lonely trav'ler from his wits.

(De Monfort *stands fixed in thought.*)

I've ta'en your mare, an' please you, from her field,
And wait your farther orders.

(De Monfort *heeds him not.*)

Her hoofs are sound, and where the saddle gall'd,
Begins to mend. What further must be done?

(De Monfort *still heeds him not.*)

His honour heeds me not. Why should I stay?

De Mon. (*eagerly, as he is going.*) He goes alone,
saidst thou?

Ser. His servant told me so.

De Mon. And at what hour?

Ser. He 'parts from Amberg by the fall of eve.
Save you, my Lord! how chang'd your count'-
nance is!

Are you not well?

De Mon. Yes, I am well : begone,
And wait my orders by the city wall :
I'll that way bend, and speak to thee again.

[EXIT Servant.]

(De Monfort *walks rapidly two or three times
across the stage ; then seizes his dagger
from the wall, looks steadfastly at its point,
and EXIT hastily.*)

SCENE III.

Moonlight. A wild path in a wood, shaded with trees. Enter DE MONFORT, with a strong expression of disquiet, mixed with fear, upon his face, looking behind him, and bending his ear to the ground, as if he listened to something.

De Mon. How hollow groans the earth beneath
my tread!

Is there an echo here? Methinks it sounds

As tho' some heavy footstep follow'd me.

I will advance no farther.

Deep settled shadows rest across the path,

And thickly-tangled boughs o'erhang this spot.

O that a tenfold gloom did cover it!

That midst the murky darkness I might strike;

As in the wild confusion of a dream,

Things horrid, bloody, terrible do pass,

As tho' they pass'd not; nor impress the mind

With the fix'd clearness of reality.

(An owl is heard screaming near him.)

(Starting) What sound is that?

(Listens, and the owl cries again.)

It is the screech-owl's cry.

Foul bird of night! what spirit guides thee here?

Art thou instinctive drawn to scenes of horror?

I've heard of this. *(Pauses and listens.)*

How those fall'n leaves so rustle on the path,

With whisp'ring noise, as tho' the earth around me

Did utter secret things?

The distant river too, bears to mine ear
A dismal wailing. O mysterious night !
Thou art not silent ; many tongues hast thou.
A distant gath'ring blast sounds thro' the wood,
And dark clouds fleetly hasten o'er the sky :
O ! that a storm would rise, a raging storm ;
Amidst the roar of warring elements
I'd lift my hand and strike ! but this pale light,
The calm distinctness of each stilly thing,
Is terrible. (*Starting*) Footsteps are near —
He comes ! he comes ! I'll watch him farther on —
I cannot do it here. [EXIT.

Enter REZENVELT, and continues his way slowly from the bottom of the stage : as he advances to the front, the owl screams, he stops and listens, and the owl screams again.

Rez. Ha ! does the night-bird greet me on my way ?

How much his hooting is in harmony
With such a scene as this ! I like it well.
Oft when a boy, at the still twilight hour,
I've leant my back against some knotted oak,
And loudly mimick'd him, till to my call
He answer would return, and, thro' the gloom,
We friendly converse held.
Between me and the star-bespangled sky,
Those aged oaks their crossing branches wave,
And thro' them looks the pale and placid moon.
How like a crocodile, or winged snake,
Yon sailing cloud bears on its dusky length !

And now transformed by the passing wind,
Methinks it seems a flying Pegasus.

Ay, but a shapeless band of blacker hue
Come swiftly after. —

A hollow murm'ring wind sounds thro' the trees;
I hear it from afar; this bodes a storm.

I must not linger here —

(*A bell heard at some distance.*)

The convent bell.

'Tis distant still: it tells their hour of prayer.

It sends a solemn sound upon the breeze,

That, to a fearful superstitious mind,

In such a scene, would like a death-knell come.

[EXIT.]

ACT V.

SCENE I. — *The inside of a Convent Chapel, of old Gothick architecture, almost dark: two torches only are seen at a distance, burning over a newly covered* grave. Lightning is seen flashing through the windows, and thunder heard, with the sound of wind beating upon the building. Enter two MONKS.*

1st Monk. The storm increases: hark how dis-
mally

It howls along the cloisters. How goes time?

* I have put above *newly-covered* instead of *new-made* grave, as it stands in the former editions, because I wish not to give the idea of a funeral procession, but merely that of a hymn or requiem sung over the grave of a person who has been recently buried.

2d Monk. It is the hour : I hear them near at hand :

And when the solemn requiem has been sung
For the departed sister, we'll retire.

Yet, should this tempest still more violent grow,
We'll beg a friendly shelter till the morn.

1st Monk. See, the procession enters : let us join
*(The organ strikes up a solemn prelude. Enter
a procession of Nuns, with the Abbess,
bearing torches. After compassing the grave
twice, and remaining there some time, the
organ plays a grand dirge, whilst they
stand round the grave.)*

SONG BY THE NUNS.

Departed soul, whose poor remains
This hallow'd lowly grave contains ;
Whose passing storm of life is o'er,
Whose pains and sorrows are no more ;
Bless'd be thou with the bless'd above !
Where all is joy, and purity, and love.

Let HIM, in might and mercy dread,
Lord of the living and the dead ;
In whom the stars of heav'n rejoice,
And the ocean lifts its voice ;
Thy spirit, purified, to glory raise,
To sing with holy saints his everlasting praise !

Departed soul, who in this earthly scene
Hast our lowly sister been,
Swift be thy way to where the blessed dwell !
Until we meet thee there, farewell ! farewell !

Enter a young Pensioner, with a wild terrified look, her hair and dress all scattered, and rushes forward amongst them.

Abb. Why com'st thou here, with such disorder'd looks,

To break upon our sad solemnity?

Pen. Oh! I did hear thro' the receding blast,
Such horrid cries! they made my blood run chill.

Abb. 'Tis but the varied voices of the storm,
Which manytimes will sound like distant screams:
It has deceiv'd thee.

Pen. O no, for twice it call'd, so loudly call'd,
With horrid strength, beyond the pitch of nature;
And Murder! murder! was the dreadful cry.

A third time it return'd with feeble strength,
But o'the sudden ceas'd, as tho' the words
Were smother'd rudely in the grappled throat,
And all was still again, save the wild blast
Which at a distance growl'd. —

Oh! it will never from my mind depart!
That dreadful cry, all i'the instant still'd:
For then, so near, some horrid deed was done,
And none to rescue.

Abb. Where didst thou hear it?

Pen. In the higher cells,
As now a window, open'd by the storm,
I did attempt to close.

1st Monk. I wish our brother Bernard were
arriv'd;
He is upon his way.

Abb. Be not alarm'd ; it still may be deception.
'Tis meet we finish our solemnity,
Nor show neglect unto the honour'd dead.

(Gives a sign, and the organ plays again: just as it ceases, a loud knocking is heard without.)

Abb. Ha ! who may this be ? hush !

(Knocking heard again.)

2d Monk. It is the knock of one in furious haste.
Hush ! hush ! What footsteps come ? Ha ! brother
Bernard.

Enter BERNARD bearing a lantern.

1st Monk. See, what a look he wears of stiffen'd
fear !

Where hast thou been, good brother ?

Bern. I've seen a horrid sight !

(All gathering round him and speaking at once.)

What hast thou seen ?

Bern. As on I hasten'd, bearing thus my light,
Across the path, not fifty paces off,
I saw a murder'd corse, stretch'd on his back,
Smear'd with new blood, as tho' but newly slain.

Abb. A man or woman was't ?

Bern. A man, a man !

Abb. Didst thou examine if within its breast
There yet were lodg'd some small remains of life ?
Was it quite dead ?

Bern. Nought in the grave is deader.
I look'd but once, yet life did never lodge
In any form so laid. —

A chilly horror seiz'd me, and I fled.

1st Monk. And does the face seem all unknown
to thee ?

Bern. The face ! I would not on the face have
look'd

For e'en a kingdom's wealth, for all the world !
O no ! the bloody neck, the bloody neck !

(Shaking his head and shuddering with horror. Loud knocking heard without.)

Sist. Good mercy ! who comes next ?

Bern. Not far behind
I left our brother Thomas on the road ;
But then he did repent him as he went,
And threatened to return.

2d Monk. See, here he comes.

Enter Brother THOMAS, with a wild terrified look.

1st Monk. How wild he looks !

Bern. *(going up to him eagerly.)* What, hast
thou seen it too ?

Thom. Yes, yes ! it glared upon me as it pass'd.

Bern. What glared upon thee ?

(All gathering round Thomas, and speaking at once.) O ! what hast thou seen ?

Thom. As, striving with the blast, I onward
came,

Turning my feeble lantern from the wind,
Its light upon a dreadful visage gleam'd,
Which paus'd and look'd upon me as it pass'd,
But such a look, such wildness of despair,

Such horror-strained features, never yet
Did earthly visage show. I shrunk and shudder'd.
If a damn'd spirit may to earth return,
I've seen it.

Bern. Was there any blood upon it ?

Thom. Nay, as it pass'd, I did not see its form ;
Nought but the horrid face.

Bern. It is the murderer.

1st Monk. What way went it ?

Thom. I durst not look till I had pass'd it far.
Then turning round, upon the rising bank,
I saw, between me and the paly sky,
A dusky form, tossing and agitated.
I stopp'd to mark it ; but, in truth, I found
'Twas but a sapling bending to the wind,
And so I onward hied, and look'd no more.

1st Monk. But we must look to't ; we must
follow it :

Our duty so commands. (*To 2d Monk.*) Will you
go, brother ?

(*To Bernard.*) And you, good Bernard ?

Bern. If I needs must go.

1st Monk. Come, we must all go.

Abb. Heaven be with you, then !

[EXEUNT Monks.]

Pen. Amen ! amen ! Good heaven be with us all !
O what a dreadful night !

Abb. Daughters, retire ; peace to the peaceful
dead !

Our solemn ceremony now is finish'd.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

A large Room in the Convent, very dark. Enter the ABBESS, Young Pensioner bearing a light, and several Nuns; she sets down the light on a table at the bottom of the stage, so that the room is still very gloomy.

Abb. They have been longer absent than I thought ;

I fear he has escap'd them.

1st Nun. Heaven forbid !

Pen. No, no, found out foul murder ever is,
And the foul murd'rer too.

2d Nun. The good Saint Francis will direct
their search ;

The blood so near this holy convent shed
For threefold vengeance calls.

Abb. I hear a noise within the inner court —
They are return'd ; (*listening.*) and Bernard's
voice I hear :

They are return'd.

Pen. Why do I tremble so ?
It is not I who ought to tremble thus.

2d Nun. I hear them at the door.

Bern. (*without.*) Open the door, I pray thee,
brother Thomas ;

I cannot now unhand the prisoner.

(*All speak together, shrinking back from the door, and staring upon one another.*) He
is with them !

(A folding door at the bottom of the stage is opened, and enter Bernard, Thomas, and the other two Monks, carrying lanterns in their hands, and bringing in De Monfort. They are likewise followed by other Monks. As they lead forward De Monfort, the light is turned away, so that he is seen obscurely; but when they come to the front of the stage, they turn the light side of their lanterns on him at once, and his face is seen in all the strengthened horror of despair, with his hands and clothes bloody.)

(Abbess and Nuns speak at once, and start back.)

Holy saints be with us!

Bern. (to Abb.) Behold the man of blood!

Abb. Of misery too; I cannot look upon him.

Bern. (to Nuns.) Nay, holy sisters, turn not thus away.

Speak to him, if, perchance, he will regard you:
For from his mouth we have no utt'rance heard,
Save one deep groan and smother'd exclamation,
When first we seiz'd him.

Abb. (to De Mon.) Most miserable man, how art thou thus? *(Pauses.)*

Thy tongue is silent, but those bloody hands
Do witness horrid things. What is thy name?

De Mon. (roused, looks steadfastly at the Abbess for some time, then speaking in a short hurried voice.) I have no name.

Abb. (to Bern.) Do it thyself; I'll speak to him no more.

Pen. O holy saints! that this should be the man
Who did against his fellow lift the stroke,
Whilst he so loudly call'd. —

Still in my ears it rings : O murder ! murder !

De Mon. (*starting.*) He calls again !

Pen. No, he did call, but now his voice is still'd.
'Tis past.

De Mon. 'Tis past.

Pen. Yes, it is past ! art thou not he who did it ?

(*De Monfort utters a deep groan, and is supported from falling by the Monks. A noise is heard without.*)

Abb. What noise is this of heavy lumb'ring steps,
Like men who with a weighty burden come ?

Bern. It is the body : I have orders given
That here it should be laid.

(*Enter men bearing the body of Rezenvelt, covered with a white cloth, and set it down in the middle of the room : they then uncover it. De Monfort stands fixed and motionless with horror, only that a sudden shivering seems to pass over him when they uncover the corpse. The Abbess and Nuns shrink back and retire to some distance, all the rest fixing their eyes steadfastly upon De Monfort. A long pause.*)

Bern. (*to De Mon.*) See'st thou that lifeless
corpse, those bloody wounds ?

See how he lies, who but so shortly since
A living creature was, with all the powers
Of sense, and motion, and humanity !

Oh! what a heart had he who did this deed!

1st Monk. (looking at the body.) How hard
those teeth against the lips are press'd,
As though he struggled still!

2d Monk. The hands, too, clench'd: the last
efforts of nature.

(De Monfort still stands motionless. Brother Thomas then goes to the body, and raising up the head a little, turns it towards De Monfort.)

Thom. Know'st thou this ghastly face?

De Mon. *(putting his hands before his face in violent perturbation.)* Oh, do not! do not!
Veil it from my sight!

Put me to any agony but this!

Thom. Ha! dost thou then confess the dreadful deed?

Hast thou against the laws of awful heav'n
Such horrid murder done? What fiend could
tempt thee?

(Pauses, and looks steadfastly at De Monfort.)

De Mon. I hear thy words, but do not hear
their sense —

Hast thou not cover'd it?

Bern. (to Thom.) Forbear, my brother, for
thou see'st right well

He is not in a state to answer thee.

Let us retire and leave him for a while.

These windows are with iron grated o'er;

He is secur'd, and other duty calls.

Thom. Then let it be.

Bern. (to Monks, &c.) Come, let us all depart.

(*EXEUNT Abbess and Nuns, followed by the Monks. One Monk lingering a little behind.*)

De Mon. All gone ! (*Perceiving the Monk.*) O stay thou here !

Monk. It must not be.

De Mon. I'll give thee gold ; I'll make thee rich in gold,

If thou wilt stay e'en but a little while.

Monk. I must not, must not stay.

De Mon. I do conjure thee !

Monk. I dare not stay with thee. (*Going.*)

De Mon. And wilt thou go ?
(*Catching hold of him eagerly.*)

O ! throw thy cloak upon this grizly form !

The unclos'd eyes do stare upon me still.

O do not leave me thus !

[*Monk covers the body, and Exit.*]

De Mon. (*alone, looking at the covered body, but at a distance.*) Alone with thee ! but thou art nothing now.

'Tis done, 'tis number'd with the things o'erpast ;
Would ! would it were to come ! —

What fated end, what darkly gathering cloud
Will close on all this horror ?

O that dire madness would unloose my thoughts,
And fill my mind with wildest fantasies,

Dark, restless, terrible ! aught, aught but this !
(*Pauses and shudders.*)

How with convulsive life he heav'd beneath me,

E'en with the death's wound gor'd ! O horrid,
horrid !

Methinks I feel him still. — What sound is that ?
I heard a smother'd groan. — It is impossible !

(Looking steadfastly at the body.)

It moves ! it moves ! the cloth doth heave and
swell.

It moves again ! I cannot suffer this —
Whate'er it be, I will uncover it.

*(Runs to the corpse, and tears off the cloth in
despair.)*

All still beneath.

Nought is there here but fix'd and grizly death,
How sternly fixed ! Oh ! those glazed eyes !
They look upon me still.

(Shrinks back with horror.)

Come, madness ! come unto me, senseless death !
I cannot suffer this ! Here, rocky wall,
Scatter these brains, or dull them !

*(Runs furiously, and, dashing his head against
the wall, falls upon the floor.)*

Enter two MONKS hastily.

1st Monk. See ; wretched man, he hath de-
stroy'd himself.

2d Monk. He does but faint. Let us remove
him hence.

1st Monk. We did not well to leave him here
alone.

2d Monk. Come, let us bear him to the open air.
[EXEUNT, bearing out De Monfort.

SCENE III.

Before the gates of the Convent. Enter JANE DE MONFORT, FREBERG, and MANUEL. As they are proceeding towards the gate, JANE stops short and shrinks back.

Freb. Ha ! wherefore ? has a sudden illness seiz'd thee ?

Jane. No, no, my friend. — And yet I'm very faint —

I dread to enter here.

Man. Ay, so I thought :

For, when between the trees, that abbey tower
First shew'd its top, I saw your count'nance
change.

But breathe a little here : I'll go before,
And make enquiry at the nearest gate.

Freb. Do so, good Manuel.

(Manuel goes and knocks at the gate.)

Courage, dear Madam : all may yet be well.
Rezenvelt's servant, frighten'd with the storm,
And seeing that his master join'd him not,
As by appointment, at the forest's edge,
Might be alarm'd, and give too ready ear
To an unfounded rumour.

He saw it not ; he came not here himself.

Jane. *(looking eagerly to the gate, where Manuel talks with the Porter.)* Ha ! see, he talks
with some one earnestly.

And see'st thou not that motion of his hands ?
 He stands like one who hears a horrid tale.
 Almighty God !

(Manuel goes into the convent.)
 He comes not back ; he enters.

Freb. Bear up, my noble friend.

Jane. I will, I will ! But this suspense is
 dreadful.

(A long pause. Manuel re-enters from the
 convent, and comes forward slowly with a
sad countenance.)

Is this the face of one who bears good tidings ?
 O God ! his face doth tell the horrid fact ?
 There is nought doubtful here.

Freb. How is it, Manuel ?

Man. I've seen him through a crevice in his
 door :

It is indeed my master.

(Bursting into tears.)

(Jane faints, and is supported by Freberg. —
*Enter ABBESS and several NUNS from the
 convent, who gather about her, and apply
 remedies. She recovers.*)

1st Nun. The life returns again.

2d Nun. Yes, she revives.

Abb. (to Freb.) Let me entreat this noble lady's
 leave

To lead her in. She seems in great distress :
 We would with holy kindness soothe her woe,
 And do by her the deeds of christian love.

Freb. Madam, your goodness has my grateful thanks.

[*EXEUNT, supporting JANE into the convent.*]

SCENE IV.

De Monfort is discovered sitting in a thoughtful posture. He remains so for some time. His face afterwards begins to appear agitated, like one whose mind is harrowed with the severest thoughts; then, starting from his seat, he clasps his hands together, and holds them up to heaven.

De Mon. O that I ne'er had known the light of day!

That filmy darkness on mine eyes had hung,
And clos'd me out from the fair face of nature!
O that my mind in mental darkness pent,
Had no perception, no distinction known,
Of fair, or foul, perfection, or defect,
Nor thought conceiv'd of proud pre-eminence!
O that it had! O that I had been form'd
An idiot from the birth! a senseless changeling,
Who eats his glutton's meal with greedy haste,
Nor knows the hand who feeds him. —

(*Pauses; then, in a calmer sorrowful voice.*)
What am I now? how ends the day of life?
For end it must; and terrible this gloom,
This storm of horrors that surrounds its close.
This little term of nature's agony
Will soon be o'er, and what is past is past:
But shall I then, on the dark lap of earth
Lay me to rest, in still unconsciousness,

Like senseless clod that doth no pressure feel
From wearing foot of daily passenger ;
Like steeped rock o'er which the breaking waves
Bellow and foam unheard ? O would I could !

*Enter MANUEL, who springs forward to his master,
but is checked upon perceiving De Monfort
draw back and look sternly at him.*

Man. My lord, my master ! O my dearest
master !

*(De Monfort still looks at him without
speaking.)*

Nay, do not thus regard me, good my Lord !
Speak to me : am I not your faithful Manuel ?

De Mon. (in a hasty broken voice.) Art thou
alone ?

Man. No, Sir, the lady Jane is on her way ;
She is not far behind.

*De Mon. (tossing his arm over his head in an
agony.)* This is too much ! All I can bear
but this !

It must not be. — Run and prevent her coming.
Say, he who is detain'd a pris'ner here
Is one to her unknown. I now am nothing.
I am a man of holy claims bereft ;
Out of the pale of social kindred cast ;
Nameless and horrible. —
Tell her De Monfort far from hence is gone
Into a desolate and distant land,
Ne'er to return again. Fly, tell her this ;
For we must meet no more.

Enter JANE DE MONFORT, bursting into the chamber, and followed by FREBERG, ABBESS, and several NUNS.

Jane. We must ! we must ! My brother, O my brother ?

(De Monfort turns away his head and hides his face with his arm. Jane stops short, and, making a great effort, turns to Freberg, and the others who followed her, and with an air of dignity stretches out her hand, beckoning them to retire. All retire but Freberg, who seems to hesitate.)

And thou too, Freberg : call it not unkind.

[Exit Freberg, Jane and De Monfort only remain.

Jane. My hapless Monfort !

(De Monfort turns round and looks sorrowfully upon her ; she opens her arms to him, and he, rushing into them, hides his face upon her breast, and weeps.)

Jane. Ay, give thy sorrow vent ; here may'st thou weep.

De Mon. (in broken accents.) Oh ! this, my sister, makes me feel again

The kindness of affection.

My mind has in a dreadful storm been tost ;
Horrid and dark.—I thought to weep no more.—
I've done a deed — But I am human still.

Jane. I know thy suff'rings: leave thy sorrow free !

Thou art with one who never did upbraid ;
Who mourns, who loves thee still.

De Mon. Ah ! say'st thou so ? no, no ; it
should not be.

(Shrinking from her.) I am a foul and bloody
murderer,

For such embrace unmeet : O leave me ! leave me !
Disgrace and public shame abide me now ;
And all, alas ! who do my kindred own,
The direful portion share. — Away, away !
Shall a disgrac'd and public criminal
Degrade thy name, and claim affinity
To noble worth like thine ? — I have no name —
I'm nothing now, not e'en to thee ; depart.

*(She takes his hand, and grasping it firmly,
speaks with a determined voice.)*

Jane. De Monfort, hand in hand we have
enjoy'd

The playful term of infancy together ;
And in the rougher path of ripen'd years
We've been each other's stay. Dark lowers our fate,
And terrible the storm that gathers o'er us ;
But nothing, till that latest agony
Which severs thee from nature, shall unloose
This fix'd and sacred hold. In thy dark prison-
house ;

In the terrific face of armed law ;
Yea, on the scaffold, if it needs must be,
I never will forsake thee.

De Mon. *(looking at her with admiration.)*

Heav'n bless thy gen'rous soul, my noble Jane !
I thought to sink beneath this load of ill,

Depress'd with infamy and open shame ;
I thought to sink in abject wretchedness :
But for thy sake I'll rouse my manhood up,
And meet it bravely ; no unseemly weakness,
I feel my rising strength, shall blot my end,
To clothe thy cheek with shame.

Jane. Yes, thou art noble still.

De Mon. With thee I am ; who were not so
with thee ?

But, ah ! my sister, short will be the term :
Death's stroke will come, and in that state beyond,
Where things unutterable wait the soul,
New from its earthly tenement discharg'd,
We shall be sever'd far.

Far as the spotless purity of virtue
Is from the murd'rer's guilt, far shall we be.
This is the gulf of dread uncertainty
From which the soul recoils.

Jane. The God who made thee is a God of
mercy ;
Think upon this.

De Mon. (*shaking his head.*) No, no ! this blood !
this blood !

Jane. Yes, e'en the sin of blood may be forgiven,
When humble penitence hath once aton'd.

De Mon. (*eagerly.*) What, after terms of
lengthen'd misery,
Imprison'd anguish of tormented spirits,
Shall I again, a renovated soul,
Into the blessed family of the good
Admittance have ? Think'st thou that this may
be ?

Speak if thou canst : O speak me comfort here !
For dreadful fancies, like an armed host,
Have push'd me to despair. It is most horrible—
O speak of hope ! if any hope there be.

*(Jane is silent, and looks sorrowfully upon him ;
then clasping her hands, and turning her eyes
to heaven, seems to mutter a prayer.)*

De Mon. Ha ! dost thou pray for me ? heav'n
hear thy prayer !

I fain would kneel.—Alas ! I dare not do it.

Jane. Not so ! all by th' Almighty Father
form'd,

May in their deepest mis'ry call on him.

Come kneel with me, my brother.

*(She kneels and prays to herself ; he kneels by
her, and clasps his hands fervently, but speaks
not. A noise of chains clanking is heard
without, and they both rise.)*

De Mon. Hear'st thou that noise ? They come
to interrupt us.

Jane. *(moving towards a side-door).* Then let us
enter here.

De Mon. *(catching hold of her with a look of
horror.)* Not there—not there—the corpse
—the bloody corpse !

Jane. What, lies he there ?—Unhappy Re-
zenvelt ?

De Mon. A sudden thought has come across
my mind ;

How came it not before ? Unhappy Rezenvelt !
Say'st thou but this ?

Jane. What should I say ? he was an honest man ;
I still have thought him such, as such lament him.
(*De Monfort utters a deep groan.*)
What means this heavy groan ?

De Mon. It hath a meaning.

Enter ABBESS and MONKS, with two OFFICERS of justice carrying fetters in their hands to put upon DE MONFORT.

Jane. (*starting.*) What men are these ?

1st Off. Lady, we are the servants of the law,
And bear with us a power, which doth constrain
To bind with fetters this our prisoner.

(*Pointing to De Monfort.*)

Jane. A stranger uncondemn'd ? this cannot be.

1st Off. As yet, indeed, he is by law unjudg'd,
But is so far condemn'd by circumstance,
That law, or custom sacred held as law,
Doth fully warrant us, and it must be.

Jane. Nay, say not so ; he has no power
t'escape :

Distress hath bound him with a heavy chain ;
There is no need of yours.

1st Off. We must perform our office.

Jane. O ! do not offer this indignity !

1st Off. Is it indignity in sacred law
To bind a murderer ? (*To 2d Officer.*) Come, do
thy work.

Jane. Harsh are thy words, and stern thy harden'd brow ;

Dark is thine eye ; but all some pity have
Unto the last extreme of misery.

I do beseech thee ! if thou art a man —

(Kneeling to him.)

(De Monfort, roused at this, runs up to Jane, and raises her hastily from the ground : then stretches himself up proudly.)

De Mon. (to Jane.) Stand thou erect in native dignity ;

And bend to none on earth the suppliant knee,
Though cloth'd in power imperial. To my
heart

It gives a feller gripe than many irons.

(Holding out his hands.) Here, officers of law, bind
on those shackles ;

And, if they are too light, bring heavier chains.
Add iron to iron ; load, crush me to the ground :
Nay, heap ten thousand weight upon my breast,
For that were best of all.

(A long pause, whilst they put irons upon him.

*After they are on, Jane looks at him sorrow-
fully, and lets her head sink on her breast.*

*De Monfort stretches out his hand, looks at
them, and then at Jane ; crosses them over
his breast, and endeavours to suppress his
feelings.*)*

* Should this play ever again be acted, perhaps it would be better that the curtain should drop here ; since here the story may be considered as completed, and what comes after, prolongs the piece too much when our interest for the fate of De Monfort is at an end.

1st Off. I have it, too, in charge to move you
hence, (To De Monfort.)
Into another chamber more secure.

De Mon. Well, I am ready, Sir.

(Approaching Jane, whom the Abbess is endeavouring to comfort, but to no purpose.)

Ah! wherefore thus! most honoured and most dear?

Shrink not at the accoutrements of ill,
Daring the thing itself.

(Endeavouring to look cheerful.)

Wilt thou permit me with a gyved hand?

(She gives him her hand, which he raises to his lips.)

This was my proudest office.

[EXEUNT, De Monfort leading out Jane.]

SCENE V.

An Apartment in the Convent, opening into another room, whose low arched door is seen in the bottom of the stage. In one corner a Monk is seen kneeling. Enter another Monk, who, on perceiving him, stops till he rises from his knees, and then goes eagerly up to him.

1st Monk. How is the prisoner?

2d Monk. (pointing to the door.) He is within,
and the strong hand of death

Is dealing with him.

1st Monk. How is this, good brother?
Methought he brav'd it with a manly spirit;

And led, with shackled hands, his sister forth,
Like one resolv'd to bear misfortune bravely.

2d Monk. Yes, with heroick courage, for a while
He seem'd inspir'd ; but soon depress'd again,
Remorse and dark despair o'erwhelm'd his soul :
And, from the violent working of his mind,
Some stream of life within his breast has burst ;
For many a time, within a little space,
The ruddy tide has rush'd into his mouth.
God grant his pains be short !

1st Monk. How does the lady ?

2d Monk. She sits and bears his head upon her
lap,

Wiping the cold drops from his ghastly face
With such a look of tender wretchedness,
It wrings the heart to see her.
How goes the night ?

1st Monk. It wears, methinks, upon the mid-
night hour.

It is a dark and fearful night ; the moon
Is wrapp'd in sable clouds ; the chill blast sounds
Like dismal lamentations. Ay, who knows
What voices mix with the dark midnight winds ?
Nay, as I pass'd that yawning cavern's mouth,
A whisp'ring sound, unearthly, reach'd my ear,
And o'er my head a chilly coldness crept.
Are there not wicked fiends and damned sprites,
Whom yawning charnels, and th' unfathom'd
depths

Of secret darkness, at this fearful hour,
Do upwards send, to watch, unseen, around

The murd'rer's death-bed, at his fatal term,
Ready to hail with dire and horrid welcome,
Their future mate? — I do believe there are.

2d Monk. Peace, peace! a God of wisdom
and of mercy,

Veils from our sight — Ha! hear that heavy
groan. (*A groan heard within.*)

1st Monk. It is the dying man. (*Another groan.*)

2d Monk. God grant him rest!

(*Listening at the door.*)

I hear him struggling in the gripe of death.

O piteous heaven! (*Goes from the door.*)

Enter Brother THOMAS from the chamber.

How now, good Brother?

Thom. Retire, my friends. O many a bed of
death

With all its pangs and horrors I have seen,
But never aught like this! Retire, my friends;
The death-bell will its awful signal give,
When he has breath'd his last.

I would move hence, but I am weak and faint :
Let me a moment on thy shoulder lean.
Oh, weak and mortal man!

(*Leans on 2d Monk : a pause.*)

Enter BERNARD from the chamber.

2d Monk. (*to Bern.*) How is your penitent?

Bern. He is with HIM who made him; HIM,
who knows

The soul of man : before whose awful presence
Th' unsceptred tyrant simple, helpless, stands
Like an unclothed babe. (*Bell tolls.*)

The dismal sound !
Retire, and pray for the blood-stained soul :
May heav'n have mercy on him ! (*Bell tolls again.*)
[EXEUNT.]

SCENE VI.

A Hall or large Room in the Convent. The bodies of DE MONFORT and REZENVELT are discovered laid out upon a low table or platform, covered with black. FREBERG, BERNARD, ABBESS, Monks and Nuns attending.

Abb. (to Freb.) Here must they lie, my Lord,
until we know
Respecting this the order of the law.

Freb. And you have wisely done, my rev'rend mother.

(Goes to the table, and looks at the bodies, but without uncovering them.)

Unhappy men ! ye, both in nature rich,
With talents and with virtues were endued.
Ye should have lov'd, yet deadly rancour came,
And in the prime and manhood of your days
Ye sleep in horrid death. O direful hate !
What shame and wretchedness his portion is,
Who, for a secret inmate, harbours thee !
And who shall call him blameless, who excites,
Ungen'rously excites, with careless scorn,
Such baleful passion in a brother's breast,
Whom heav'n commands to love ? Low are ye
laid :

Still all contention now. — Low are ye laid :
I lov'd you both, and mourn your hapless fall.

Abb. They were your friends, my Lord ?

Freb. I lov'd them both. How does the Lady
Jane ?

Abb. She bears misfortune with intrepid soul.
I never saw in woman bow'd with grief,
Such moving dignity.

Freb. Ay, still the same.

I've known her long : of worth most excellent ;
But in the day of woe, she ever rose
Upon the mind with added majesty,
As the dark mountain more sublimely tow'rs
Mantled in clouds and storm.

Enter MANUEL and JEROME.

Man. (*pointing.*) Here, my good Jerome,
here's a piteous sight.

Jer. A piteous sight ! yet I will look upon him :
I'll see his face in death. Alas, alas !
I've seen him move a noble gentleman !
And when with vexing passion undisturb'd,
He look'd most graciously.

(*Lifts up in mistake the cloth from the body of
Rezenvelt, and starts back with horror.*)
Oh ! this was the bloody work ! Oh ! oh, oh, oh !
That human hands could do it !

(*Drops the cloth again.*)

Man. That is the murder'd corpse ; here lies
De Monfort.

(*Going to uncover the other body.*)

Jer. (*turning away his head.*) No, no! I cannot look upon him now.

Man. Didst thou not come to see him?

Jer. Fy! cover him — inter him in the dark — Let no one look upon him.

Bern. (*To Jer.*) Well dost thou shew the abhorrence nature feels

For deeds of blood, and I commend thee well.
In the most ruthless heart compassion wakes
For one, who, from the hand of fellow man,
Hath felt such cruelty.

(*Uncovering the body of Rezenvelt.*)

This is the murder'd corse :

(*Uncovering the body of De Monfort.*)

But see, I pray!

Here lies the murderer. What think'st thou here?
Look on those features, thou hast seen them oft,
With the last dreadful conflict of despair,
So fix'd in horrid strength.

See those knit brows ; those hollow sunken eyes ;
The sharpen'd nose, with nostrils all distent ;
That writhed mouth, where yet the teeth appear,
In agony, to gnash the nether lip.

Think'st thou, less painful than the murd'rer's
knife

Was such a death as this ?

Ay, and how changed too those matted locks !

Jer. Merciful heaven ! his hair is grisly grown,
Chang'd to white age, that was, but two days
since,

Black as the raven's plume. How may this be ?

Bern. Such change, from violent conflict of
the mind,
Will sometimes come.

Jer. Alas, alas ! most wretched !
Thou wert too good to do a cruel deed,
And so it kill'd thee. Thou hast suffer'd for it.
God rest thy soul ! I needs must touch thy hand,
And bid thee long farewell.

(*Laying his hand on De Monfort.*)

Bern. Draw back, draw back : see where the
lady comes.

Enter JANE DE MONFORT. FREBERG, *who has been for some time retired by himself to the bottom of the stage, now steps forward to lead her in, but checks himself on seeing the fixed sorrow of her countenance, and draws back respectfully.* JANE advances to the table, and looks attentively at the covered bodies. MANUEL points out the body of DE MONFORT, and she gives a gentle inclination of the head, to signify that she understands him. She then bends tenderly over it, without speaking.

Man. (to Jane, as she raises her head.) Oh,
madam ! my good lord.

Jane. Well says thy love, my good and faithful Manuel :

But we must mourn in silence.

Man. Alas ! the times that I have followed him !

Jane. Forbear, my faithful Manuel. For this
love
Thou hast my grateful thanks ; and here's my
hand :

Thou hast lov'd him, and I'll remember thee.
Where'er I am ; in what'er spot of earth
I linger out the remnant of my days,
I will remember thee.

Man. Nay, by the living God ! where'er you are,
There will I be. I'll prove a trusty servant :
I'll follow you, even to the world's end.
My master's gone ; and I indeed am mean,
Yet will I shew the strength of nobler men,
Should any dare upon your honour'd worth
To put the slightest wrong. Leave you, dear
lady !

Kill me, but say not this !

(Throwing himself at her feet.)

Jane. (raising him.) Well, then ! be thou my
servant, and my friend.

Art thou, good Jerome, too, in kindness come ?
I see thou art. How goes it with thine age ?

Jer. Ah, Madam ! woe and weakness dwell
with age :

Would I could serve you with a young man's
strength !

I'd spend my life for you.

Jane.

Thanks, worthy Jerome.

O ! who hath said, the wretched have no friends ?

Freb. In every sensible and gen'rous breast
Affliction finds a friend ; but unto thee,
Thou most exalted and most honourable,
The heart in warmest adoration bows,
And even a worship pays.

Jane. Nay, Freberg, Freberg ! grieve me not,
my friend.

He, to whose ear my praise most welcome was,
Hears it no more ; and, oh, our piteous lot !
What tongue will talk of him ? Alas, alas !
This more than all will bow me to the earth ;
I feel my misery here.
The voice of praise was wont to name us both :
I had no greater pride.

(Covers her face with her hands, and bursts into tears. Here they all hang about her : Freberg supporting her tenderly, Manuel embracing her knees, and old Jerome catching hold of her robe affectionately. Bernard, Abbess, Monks, and Nuns, likewise, gather round her, with looks of sympathy.)

Enter two Officers of law.

1st Off. Where is the prisoner ?
Into our hands he straight must be consign'd.

Bern. He is not subject now to human laws ;
The prison that awaits him is the grave.

1st Off. Ha ! say'st thou so ? there is foul play
in this.

Man. *(to Off.)* Hold thy unrighteous tongue,
or hie thee hence,
Nor, in the presence of this honour'd dame,
Utter the slightest meaning of reproach.

1st Off. I am an officer on duty call'd,
And have authority to say, “ How died he ? ”

(Here Jane shakes off the weakness of grief, and repressing Manuel, who is about to reply to the Officer, steps forward with dignity.)

Jane. Tell them by whose authority you come,
He died that death which best becomes a man
Who is with keenest sense of conscious ill
And deep remorse assail'd, a wounded spirit :
A death that kills the noble and the brave,
And only them. He had no other wound.

1st Off. And shall I trust to this ?

Jane. Do as thou wilt :
To one who can suspect my simple word
I have no more reply. Fulfil thine office.

1st Off. No, Lady, I believe your honour'd word,
And will no further search.

Jane. I thank your courtesy : thanks, thanks to
all ;

My rev'rend mother, and ye honour'd maids ;
Ye holy men, and you, my faithful friends ;
The blessing of the afflicted rest with you !
And He, who to the wretched is most piteous,
Will recompense you. — Freberg, thou art good ;
Remove the body of the friend you lov'd :
'Tis Rezenvelt I mean. Take thou this charge :
'Tis meet, that with his noble ancestors
He lie entomb'd in honourable state.
And now I have a sad request to make,
Nor will these holy sisters scorn my boon ;
That I, within these sacred cloister walls,
May raise a humble, nameless tomb to him,

Who, but for one dark passion, one dire deed,
 Had claim'd a record of as noble worth,
 As e'er enrich'd the sculptur'd pedestal.

[EXEUNT.]

Note. — The last three lines of the last speech are not intended to give the reader a true character of *De Monfort*, whom I have endeavoured to represent throughout the Play as, notwithstanding his other good qualities, proud, suspicious, and susceptible of envy, but only to express the partial sentiments of an affectionate sister, naturally more inclined to praise him from the misfortune into which he had fallen.

✍ *The Tragedy of DE MONFORT has been brought out at Drury-Lane Theatre, adapted to the stage by Mr. Kemble. I am infinitely obliged to that Gentleman for the excellent powers he has exerted, assisted by the incomparable talents of his sister, Mrs. Siddons, in endeavouring to obtain for it that publick favour, which I sincerely wish it had been found more worthy of receiving.*

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Printed by A. and R. Spottiswoode,
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A
SERIES OF PLAYS.

VOL. II.

Printed by A. and R. Spottiswoode,
Printers-Street, London.

A
SERIES OF PLAYS:

IN WHICH
IT IS ATTEMPTED TO DELINEATE
THE
STRONGER PASSIONS OF THE MIND :
EACH PASSION
BEING THE
SUBJECT OF A TRAGEDY AND A COMEDY.

BY
JOANNA BAILLIE.

A NEW EDITION.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

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PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1821.

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TO
MATTHEW BAILLIE, M. D.

AS AN
OFFERING OF GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION
FOR THE UNWEARIED ZEAL
AND BROTHERLY PARTIALITY
WHICH HAVE CHEERED AND SUPPORTED ME
IN THE COURSE OF THIS WORK,
I INSCRIBE THIS VOLUME.

TO THE READER.

AFTER a considerable interval of time from the publishing of the first, I now offer to the Public a second volume of the "Series of Plays;" and, with it, my very grateful thanks for that indulgence and cheering approbation which has encouraged me to proceed thus far in my work. I have to thank it for that kind of reception which is best calculated to make a work go on well — praise mixed with a considerable portion of censure. I have to thank it, indeed, for that kind of reception which I solicited; conscious that it was the best, in regard to my real interest, which I could receive; as well as the very best, in regard to my merits, which I could possibly presume to expect. If with this great advantage, beyond what I enjoyed when I wrote the first part of this work, I have fallen short in the second volume, of what might have been reasonably expected from me, I have only to say for myself, that I have done my best, and that my abilities are in fault, and not my industry. The

time, indeed, that has elapsed since the publication of the first volume, will, I trust, be considered as a proof that the portion of public approbation with which I have been favoured, has not rendered me presumptuous.

I know there are causes why the second part of a work should be more severely dealt with than that which has preceded it: but after what I have experienced, it would be ungrateful in me not to suppose that the generality of readers will take up this volume with a disposition to be pleased: and that they will also, in favour of one who has no great pretensions to learning or improvements, be inclined to extend the term of good-natured indulgence a little beyond its ordinary limits.

The first play in this volume is a comedy on Hatred, as a companion to the tragedy I have already published upon the same subject. Of this I shall say little. I have endeavoured in it to show this passion in a different situation, and fostered by a different species of provocation, from that which was exhibited in *De Monfort*, and existing in a character of much less delicacy and reserve. I am aware, that it falls greatly short of that degree of comic effect which the subject is calculated to produce, and which a writer of truer comic talents would have given it.

The subject of the other three plays is Ambition. It is with regret that I have extended the serious part of it to an unusual length, but I found that within a smaller compass I could not give such a

view of the passion as I wished. Those passions which are of a permanent nature are the proper subjects of this work ; such I mean as are capable of taking up their abode in the mind, and of gaining a strong ascendancy over it during a term of some length ; I have, therefore, in all these plays, given myself greater scope in point of time than is usual with dramatic writers. But, compared with ambition, perhaps all other passions may be considered as of a transient nature. They are capable of being gratified ; and, when they are gratified, they become extinct, or subside, and shade themselves off (if I may be allowed the expression) into other passions and affections. Ambition alone acquires strength from gratification, and after having gained one object, still sees another rise before it, to which it as eagerly pushes on ; and the dominion which it usurps over the mind is capable of enduring from youth to extreme age. To give a full view, therefore, of this passion, it was necessary to show the subject of it in many different situations, and passing through a considerable course of events ; had I attempted to do this within the ordinary limits of one play, that play must have been so entirely devoted to this single object, as to have been left bare of every other interest or attraction. These are my reasons for making so large a demand on the patience of my reader in favour of this passion ; and if I am pardoned in this instance, there is little danger of my offending again in the same manner.

I am perfectly sensible, that from the length of these tragedies, and, perhaps, some other defects, they are not altogether adapted to the stage; but I would fain flatter myself, that either of the parts of *Ethwald* might, with very little trouble, be turned into an acting play, that would neither fatigue nor offend. I should, indeed, very much regret any essential defect in this work, that might render it unfit for being more generally useful and amusing.

The scene of these plays is laid in Britain, in the kingdom of Mercia, and the time towards the end of the Heptarchy. This was a period full of internal discord, usurpation, and change; the history of which is too perplexed, and too little connected with any very important or striking event in the affairs of men, to be familiarly known, not merely to common readers, but even to the more learned in history. I have, therefore, thought, that I might here, without offence, fix my story; here give it a “habitation and a name,” and model it to my own fancy, as might best suit my design.— In so doing, I run no risk of disturbing or deranging the recollection of any important truth, or of any thing that deserves to be remembered. However, though I have not adhered to history, the incidents and events of the plays will be found, I hope, consistent with the character of the times; with which I have also endeavoured to make the representation I have given of manners, opinions, and persons, uniformly correspond. I have, indeed, given a very dark picture of the religion and

the clergy of those days ; but it is a true one : and I believe it will be perceived throughout the whole, that it is drawn by one, who would have touched it with a lighter hand, had the spirit and the precepts of Christianity, and above all, the superlatively beautiful character of its divine Founder, been more indifferent to her.

To give a view of Ambition, as it is generally found in the ordinary intercourse of life, excited by vanity rather than the love of power, and displayed in a character which is not, like that of Ethwald, supported by the consciousness of abilities adequate to its designs, has been my object in the comedy that accompanies the foregoing tragedies. As a long period of time, and a long chain of events, did not appear necessary to this purpose, I have confined myself to the usual limits of a dramatic work. There is nothing, I believe, either in the story or the characters of the piece, that call upon me to say any thing in regard to them. Such as it is, I leave it, with its companions, in the hands of my reader, with some degree of confidence struggling against many fears : and I am willing to hope, that, if in the course of this volume I have given, in general, a true representation of human nature, under such circumstances as interest our hearts and excite our curiosity, many sins will be forgiven me ; especially as, I trust, they are not sins of carelessness or presumption.

THE ELECTION :

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN :

BALTIMORE, *a country gentleman, and the head of an old family fallen into decay.*

FREEMAN, *a great clothier, who has acquired by his own industry a very large fortune.*

TRUEBRIDGE, *the friend of Baltimore.*

CHARLES, *an idle young man, cousin to Baltimore, and brought up in his house.*

JENKINSON, }
SERVET, } *Two Attorneys.*

BESCATTI, *an Italian master.*

DAVID, }
PETER, } *Servants to Baltimore.*

Voters, Mob, Boys, Jailers, &c. &c.

WOMEN :

Mrs. BALTIMORE.

Mrs. FREEMAN.

CHARLOTTE, *daughter to Freeman.*

GOVERNESS.

MARGERY, *an old servant of the Baltimore family.*
Servants, Voters' Wives, Mob, &c.

THE ELECTION.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *The open market-place of a small country town, a crowd of men, women, and children, seen on the back ground; MARGERY and Countryman, surrounded with several others, are discovered talking on the front of the stage.*

MARGERY.

PATRON! pot-man an' you will. As long as he holds the brown jug to their heads, they'll run after him an' he were the devil. Oh! that I should live to see the heir of the ancient family of Baltimore set aside in his own borough by a nasty, paltry, nobody-knows-who of an upstart! What right has he, forsooth! to set himself up for to oppose a noble gentleman? I remember his own aunt very well; a poor industrious pains-taking woman, with scarcely a pair of shoes to her feet.

Countryman. Well, well, and what does that signify, Goody? He has covered more bare feet with new shoes since he came among us, than all the noble families in the country, let his aunt wear

what shoes she would: ay and his bounty has filled more empty bellies too, though his granum might dine on a turnip, for aught I know or care about the matter.

Mar. Don't tell me about his riches, and his bounty, and what not: will all that ever make him any thing else than the son of John Freeman the weaver? I wonder to hear you talk such nonsense, Arthur Wilkins; you that can read books and understand reason: such a fellow as that is not good enough to stand cap in hand before Mr. Baltimore.

(The rabble come forward, huzzaing, and making a great noise, and take different sides of the stage.)

Croud on F. side. Huzza! Huzza! Freeman for ever!

Mar. Yes, yes, to be sure: Freeman for ever: fat Sam the butcher for ever! black Dick the tinker for ever! any body is good enough for you, filthy rascallions!

1st Mob on F. side. Ay, scold away, old Margery! Freeman for ever! say I. Down with your proud, pennyless gentry! Freeman for ever!

Mar. Down with your rich would-be-gentry upstarts! Baltimore for ever! *(to mob on her side)* Why don't you call out, oafs?

(The mob on her side call out Baltimore, and the mob on the other, Freeman; but the F. side gets the better.)

What, do you give it up so? you poor, spiritless

nincumpoops! I would roar till I bursted first, before I would give it up so to such a low-liv'd, beggarly rabble.

2d Mob on F. side. They lack beef and porter, Margery. That makes fellows loud and hearty, I trow. Coats of arms and old pictures wont fill a body's stomach. Come over to Freeman-hall, and we'll shew you good cheer, woman. Freeman for ever!

Mar. Ha' done with your bawling, blackimoor! what care I for your good cheer? none of your porter nor your beef for me, truly!

2d Mob on F. side. No, Goody! mayhap, as you have been amongst the gentry all your life, you may prefer a cup of nice sage tea, or a little nice rue-water, or a leg of a roasted snipe, or a bit of a nice tripe dumplin.

Mar. Close your fool's mouth, oaf! or I'll cram a dumplin into it that you won't like the chewing of. Mr. Baltimore's father kept a table like a prince, when your poor beggarly candidate's father had scarcely a potatoe in his pot. But knaves like you were not admitted within his gates to see it, indeed. Better men than you, or your master either, were not good enough to take away his dirty trenchers; and the meanest creature about his house was as well dress'd, and in as good order, as if it had been the king's court, and every day in the year had been a Sunday.

2d Mob on F. side. So they were, Goody; I

remember it very well; the very sucking pigs ran about his yard with full bottom'd wigs on, and the grey goose waddled through the dirt with a fine flounced petticoat.

Mar. Hold your fool's tongue, do! no upstart parliament-men for me! Baltimore for ever!

Croud on B. side call out, Baltimore for ever!

1st Mob on B. side. Sour paste and tangled bobbins for weavers!

1st Mob on F. side. Empty purses and tatter'd lace for gentlemen!

Old woman on B side. We'll have no strange new-comers for our member: Baltimore for me!

Old woman on F. side. Good broth is better than good blood, say I: Freeman for me!

Little Boy on B. side. Weaver, weaver, flap, flap!

Grin o'er your shuttle, and rap, rap!

(Acting the motion of a weaver.)

Little Boy on F. side. Gentleman, gentleman, proud of a word!

Stand on your tip-toes, and bow to my lord!

(Acting a gentleman.)

Mar. Go, you little devil's imp! who teaches you to blaspheme your betters? *(She gives the boy a box on the ear: the mob on the other side take his part: a great uproar and confusion, and exeunt both sides fighting.)*

SCENE II.

A walk leading through a grove to BALTIMORE'S house, and close by it. Enter Mrs. BALTIMORE, as if just alighted from her carriage, followed by her Maid and PETER, carrying a box and portfolio, and other things.

Mrs. Balt. But what does all this distant noise and huzzaing mean? the whole town is in commotion.

Pet. It is nothing, as I know of, Ma'am, but my Master and Mr. Freeman's voters fighting with one another at the alehouse doors, to shew their goodwill to the candidates, as all true hearty fellows do at an election.

Mrs. B. Yes, our member is dead suddenly; I had forgot. But who are the candidates?

Pet. My master, Madam, and Mr. Freeman.

Mrs. B. Gentlemen supported by them, you mean?

Pet. No Ma'am, I mean their own two selves, for their own two selves. But I beg pardon for naming such a man as Freeman on the same day with a gentleman like my Master.

Mrs. B. Mr. Freeman, if you please, Peter; and never let me hear you name him with disrespect in my presence. Carry those things into the house: *(to the maid)* and you too, Blond; I see Mr. Baltimore.

"(EXEUNT Servants.

Enter BALTIMORE.

Balt. My dear Isabella, you are welcome home: how are you after your journey?

Mrs. B. Perfectly well ; and very glad, even after so short an absence, to find myself at home again. But what is going on here? I have heard strange news just now : Peter tells me you are a candidate for the Borough, and Mr. Freeman is your rival. It is some blunder of his own, I suppose?

Balt. No, it is not.

Mrs. B. (*stepping back in surprise, and holding up her hands.*) And are you actually throwing away the last stake of your ruin'd fortune on a contested election.

Balt. I will sell every acre of land in my possession, rather than see that man sit in parliament for the borough of Westown.

Mrs. B. And why should not he as well as another? The declining fortunes of your family have long made you give up every idea of the kind for yourself: of what consequence, then, can it possibly be to you? I know very well, my dear Baltimore, it is not a pleasant thing for the representative of an old family declined in fortune, to see a rich obscure stranger buy up all the land on every side, and set himself down like a petty prince in his neighbourhood. But if he had not done it, some other most likely would; and what should we have gain'd by the change?

Balt. O! any other than himself I could have suffer'd.

Mrs. B. You amaze me. He has some disagreeable follies, I confess; but he is friendly and liberal.

Balt. Yes, yes, he affects patronage and public spirit : he is ostentatious to an absurdity.

Mrs. B. Well then, don't disturb yourself about it. If he is so, people will only laugh at him.

Balt. O ! hang them, but they wont laugh ! I have seen the day, when, if a man made himself ridiculous, the world would laugh at him. But now, by heaven, every thing that is mean, disgusting, and absurd, pleases them but so much the better ! If they would but laugh at him, I should be content.

Mrs. B. My dear Baltimore ! curb this strange fancy that has taken such a strong hold of your mind, and be reasonable.

Balt. I can be reasonable enough. I can see as well as you do that it is nonsense to disturb myself about this man ; and when he is absent I can resolve to endure him : but whenever I see him again, there is something in his full satisfied face ; in the tones of his voice ; ay, in the very gait and shape of his legs, that is insufferable to me.

Mrs. B. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha !

Balt. What makes you laugh, Madam ?

Mrs. B. Indeed I have more cause to cry ! yet I could not help laughing when you talk'd of his gait and his legs : for people, you must know, have taken it into their heads that there is a resemblance between you and him ! I have, myself, in twilight, sometimes mistaken the one for the other.

Balt. It must have been in midnight, I think. People have taken it into their heads ! blind idiots ! I could kick my own shins if I thought they had the smallest resemblance to his.

Mrs. B. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha !

Balt. And this is matter of amusement for you, Ma'am ? I abhor laughing.

Mrs. B. Pray, pray, forgive me ! This is both ludicrous and distressing. I knew that you disliked this man from the first day he settled in your neighbourhood, and that, during two years' acquaintance, your aversion has been daily encreasing ; but I had no idea of the extravagant height to which it has now arrived.

Balt. Would I had sold every foot of my lands, and settled in the lone wilds of America, ere this man came, to be the sworn possessor of my forefathers' lands ; their last remaining son, now cramp'd and elbow'd round, in one small corner of their once wide and extensive domains ! Oh ! I shall never forget what I felt, when, with that familiar and disgusting affability, he first held out to me his damned palm, and hail'd me as a neighbour. (*striding up and down the stage.*) Ay, by my soul, he pretends to be affable !

Mrs. B. You feel those things too keenly.

Balt. A stock or a stone would feel it. He has opposed me in every contest, from the election of a member of parliament down to the chusing of a parish clerk ; and yet, damn him ! he will never give me a fair occasion of quarrelling with him, for

then I should be happier. (*striding up and down again.*) Hang it: it was not worth a pinch of snuff to me, whether the high road went on one side of my field or the other; but only that I saw he was resolved to oppose me in it, and I would have died rather than have yielded to him.

Mrs. B. Are you sure, Baltimore, that your own behaviour has not provoked him to that opposition?

Balt. (*striding up and down as he speaks.*) He has extended his insolent liberalities over the whole country round. The very bantlings lisp his name as they sit on their little stools in the sun.

Mrs. B. My dear friend!

Balt. He has built two new towers to his house; and it rears up its castled head amongst the woods, as if its master were the lord and chieftain of the whole surrounding country.

Mrs. B. And has this power to offend you?

Balt. No, no, let him pile up his house to the clouds, if he will! I can bear all this patiently: it is his indelicate and nauseous civility that drives me mad. He goggles and he smiles: he draws back his full watery lip like a toad. (*making a mouth of disgust.*) Then he spreads out his nail-bitten fingers as he speaks — hah!

Mrs. B. And what great harm does all this do you?

Balt. What harm! it makes my very flesh creep like the wriggings of a horse-leech or a maggot. It is an abomination beyond all endurance!

Mrs. B. The strange fancies you take in regard to every thing this poor man does, are to me astonishing.

Balt. (*Stopping short, and looking fixedly on her.*) Are to you astonishing! I doubt it not: I was a fool to expect that a wife so many years younger than myself would have any sympathy with my feelings.

Mrs. B. Baltimore! you wrong me, unkindly.—But his daughter comes: she will overhear us.

Balt. What brings that affected fool here? She is always coming here. It is an excrescence from the toad's back: the sight of her is an offence to me.

(*Enter Charlotte, with an affected air of great delicacy.*)

Char. How do you do, my dear Mrs. Baltimore? I am quite charm'd to see you. (*curtseys affectedly to Balt.*)

Mrs. B. I thank you, my dear; you are early abroad this morning.

Char. Oh! I am almost kill'd with fatigue; but I saw your carriage at the gate, and I could not deny myself the pleasure of enquiring how you do. The heat overcomes one so much in this weather: it is enough to make one faint: it is really horrid. (*speaking in a faint, soft voice, and fanning herself affectedly.*)

Mrs. B. It does not affect me.

Char. No! O you are not so robust, I am sure.

(*Enter a little country girl, trailing a great piece of muslin after her.*)

Girl to Char. Here, Miss ; here is a piece of your petticoat that you left on the bushes, as you scrambled over the hedge to look at the bird's nest yonder.

Char. (in confusion.) O la! the briars will catch hold of one so, as one goes along. Give it me, give it me (*takes the muslin, and crams it hastily into her pocket*). This weather makes one go by the side of ditches, and amongst bushes, and any where for a little shade.

Balt. Tadpoles love ditches in all weathers.

(EXIT.)

Char. (looking after him strangely for a moment or two, and then skipping lightly up to Mrs. B. and taking her kindly by the hand.) Thank heaven he's gone ! I stand more in awe of him, than my mother and my governess, and all the whole pack of masters that ever came about the house. If there was not a certain look about him now and then, that puts me in mind of my father, I should take a downright aversion to him. O ! I beg pardon ! I mean I should not like him very well, even tho' he is your husband. But was it not provoking in that little chit to follow me with those rags in her hand ?

Mrs. B. I suppose we shall have a glove or a garter coming after you bye-and-bye.

Char. O they may bring what they please now ! — Well, How d'ye do ? how d'ye do ? how d'ye do ? (*taking Mrs. B. by the hand, and skipping round her joyfully.*)

Mrs. B. Very well, my good little Charlotte.

Char. I am delighted to see you return'd. Ah, don't you remember how good you were to me, when I was a little urchin at Mrs. Highman's school? and how I used to stand by your side when you dress'd, and count over the pins in your pincushion?

Mrs. B. I remember it very well.

Char. But how comes it that we meet so seldom? you never come to see us now, and I dare not come to you so often as I wish, for Mr. Baltimore looks at me so sternly. Let papa and him contend with one another as they please; what have we to do with their plaguy election? O if we were but together! we could work and talk to one another all day long, and it would be so pleasant!

Mrs. B. Indeed, my dear Charlotte, I wish I could have you frequently with me; but I hope you have many pleasant employments at home.

Char. Ah, but I have not tho'. I am tired to death of music, and drawing, and Italian, and German, and geography, and astronomy, and washes to make my hands white. (*shaking her head piteously.*) But what does it signify fretting? I know I must be an accomplish'd woman; I know it very well.

Mrs. B. (*smiling.*) Don't you like to be occupied?

Char. O yes: it is not that I am a lazy girl. If they would plague me no more with my masters, but give me some plain pocket-handkerchiefs to hem, I would sit upon the footstool all day, and sing like a linnet.

Mrs. B. My dear girl, and so there must be things in this mix'd world to keep even thy careless breast from being as blithe as a linnet. But you were going home: I'll walk a little way with you.

Char. I thank you (*looking off the stage*). Is not that Charles at a distance? I dare say, now, he has been a fishing, or looking after coveys of partridges, or loit'ring about the horse dealers. I hope he did not see me get over the hedge tho'.

Mrs. B. Alas, poor Charles! I wish he had more useful occupations. It is a sad thing for a young man to be hanging about idle.

Char. So my papa says: and, do you know, I believe he had it in his head to get some appointment for him when this election came in the way. Shall I put him in mind of it?

Mrs. B. No, no, my dear Charlotte, that must not be. Shall we walk?

Char. (*scampering off*.) Stop a little, pray. (EXIT.)

Mrs. B. Where is she gone to now?

Char. (*returning with something in her lap*.) Only to fetch my two black kittens. I bought them from a boy, as I went along, to save them from drowning. I could not curtsy to Mr. Baltimore, you know, with kittens in my lap, so I dropp'd them slyly under the hedge as I enter'd; for this fellow with the white spot on his nose makes a noise like a little 'devil. (*They go arm in*

arm to the side of the stage to go out, when

Mrs. B. looking behind her stops short.)

Mrs. B. No, I must not walk farther with you

just now : I see Mr. Truebridge coming this way, and I wish to speak to him. Good morning, my dear Charlotte. (EXIT Charlotte.)

Enter TRUEBRIDGE.

You are hurrying away very fast ; I did not know you were here.

True. I have been in the library writing a letter, which I ought to have done before I left my own house. I am going from home for a few days, and I came to see Baltimore before I set out.

Mrs. B. You are always going from home. I am very sorry you are going at this time, when your presence here might have been so useful. You might have persuaded Baltimore, perhaps, to give up this foolish contest with so rich a competitor as Freeman.

True. No, it is better, perhaps, to let them fight it out. We should only have separated them, like two game-cocks, who are sure to be at it again, beak and spurs, with more fury than ever.

Re-enter BALTIMORE.

Balt to True. You have forgot your letter. A pleasant journey to you ! (*gives him a letter.*)

True. Farewell for a few days ! I hope to learn, on my return, that you have carried on this contest with temper and liberality, since you will engage in it.

Balt. Why, you know, Truebridge, I am compell'd to engage in it.

True. O certainly, and by very weighty reasons too ! A man may injure in a hundred different ways and provoke no hostile return ; but when added to

some petty offences, he varies his voice and gesture, wears his coat and doublet, nay, picks his very teeth in a manner that is irksome to us, what mortal is there, pagan or believer, that can refrain from setting himself in array against him?

Balt. Well, well! give yourself no trouble. I'll keep my temper; I'll do every thing calmly and reasonably.

True. Do so; I sha'n't return, probably, till the poll is closed. I have told you my reasons for taking no part in the business; and let the new member be who he will, I'm resolved to shake hands cordially with him. It won't do for one who has honours and pensions in view, to quarrel with great men. Good bye to you!—Madam, all success to your wishes. [EXIT.

Balt. Ask favours of such a creature as Freeman! He speaks it but in jest. Yet if I did not know him to be one of the most independent men in the world, I should be tempted to believe that he too had become sophisticated.

Mrs. B. Ah, do not torment yourself with suspicions! I am afraid it is a disposition that has been growing upon you of late.

Balt. No, madam; it is upon you this disposition has been growing. Whenever I am in the company of that—I will not name him—I have of late observed that your eyes are bent upon me perpetually. I hate to be look'd at when I am in that man's company. [EXEUNT.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A room in FREEMAN's house ; a table with drawings, &c. scattered upon it, in one corner, and a writing-table near the front of the stage. Mrs. FREEMAN is discovered writing. Enter CHARLOTTE and her Governess.*

Mrs. FREEMAN, (raising her head.)

Come here, Miss Freeman : that gown sits with no grace in the world (*turning Char. round.*) No, it is not at all what I intended : I shall have it taken to pieces again. (*To the Gov.*) Was she in the stocks this morning ?

Gov. Yes, Madam.

Mrs. F. From her manner of holding her head one would scarcely believe it. Go to your drawing, and finish it if you can before Mr. Bescatti comes. (*Charlotte sits down unwillingly to the drawing table ; the Governess takes her work and sits by her ; and Mrs. Freeman sits down again to write.*)

Enter Mr. BESCATTI.

Mrs. F. O Bescatti ! you are just the very person I want. I have put a quotation from one of your Italian poets, expressive of the charms of friendship, into the letter I am writing to my dear, amiable Mrs. Syllabub ; and as I know she shews all the letters she receives from her friends, I would

not have a fault in it for the world. Look at it, pray! Will it do? (*giving him the letter with an air of self-satisfaction.*)

Bes. (*shaking his head.*) No, Madam; I must be free to say, dat it won't do: de two first ords are wrong, and de two last ords are not right.

Mrs. F. (*colouring and bridling up.*) Why there are but four words of it altogether, Mr. Bescatti.

Bes. Yes, Madam; der you be very right; der you be under no mistake at all; der be just four ords in it, neider more nor less.

Mrs. F. Well, well, pray correct it for me! I suppose I was thinking of something else when I wrote it.

Bes. (*after correcting the letter.*) It is done, Madam. I hope de young lady will soon finish her drawing, dat I may have de honour to propose my little instruction.

Char. (*rising from the table.*) I can finish it to-morrow.

Mrs. F. Shew Mr. Bescatti your two last drawings (*Char. shews him her drawings.*) Every one from your country is fond of this delightful art. How do you like this piece?

Bes. It be very agreeable.

Gov. (*looking over his shoulder.*) O beautiful, charming! de most pretty of de world!

Mrs. F. There is such a fine glow in the colouring! so much spirit in the whole.

Bes. (*tardily.*) Yes.

Mrs. F. And so much boldness in the design.

Bes. (*tardily.*) Yes.

Mrs. F. And the cattle in that landscape are so spirited and so correct.

Bes. O dey be de very pretty sheep, indeed.

Mrs. F. Why, those are cows, Mr. Bescatti—those are cows.

Bes. O, Madam, I make no doubt dat in reality dey are the cows, alto in appearance dey are de sheep.

Mrs. F. (*shewing him another piece.*) He will understand this better. The subject is so prettily imagined! a boy with an apple in his hand: such pleasing simplicity! look at those lights and shades: her master himself says it is touched with the hand of an artist.

Bes. Yes, he be a very pretty fellow—and a very happy one too: he has got one apple in his hand, and anoder in his mout.

Mrs. F. Another in his mouth! why that is the round swelling of his cheek, Mr. Bescatti. But look at his head (*impatiently as he looks at the wrong one.*) No, no, this one.

Bes. O dat one—dat has one side of the face white and t'oder black!

Gov. O beautiful, excellent!—all dat der is of pretty—all dat der is of—of de most pretty!

Mrs. F. There is so much effect in it; so much force and distinctness.

Bes. Yes, der be good contrast; nobody will mistake de one side of de face for de oder.

Enter Servant.

Ser. Every thing in the next room is set out, Ma'am—Have you any orders?

Mrs. F. Don't trouble me about it: I'll look at it by and by, if I have nothing better to do. (*Exit Ser.*)—Miss Freeman, there is no time to lose; Bescatti and you must be busy, for I expect Mr. Tweedle this morning with a new song in his pocket.

Enter a Servant hastily.

Ser. All the voters are come, Ma'am, and my master says we must open the great room immediately. (*Opens folding-doors at the bottom of the stage, and discovers a large room with a long table set out, plentifully covered with cold meats, &c. &c.*

Mrs. F. What could possess the creatures to come so early? If I am to have the whole morning of it, I shall be dead before it is over. Heigh ho! here they are.

(*Enter a great number of voters with their wives and daughters, and Freeman shewing them in himself.*)

Free. (*with a very affable smiling countenance.*) Come in, ladies and gentlemen; come in, my very good neighbours; my wife will be proud to see you. (*presents them to Mrs. Freeman, who receives them with affected condescension; whilst Charlotte draws herself up by her mother's side, and curtsies to them in the same affected manner.*)—This is my very good friend Mr. Ginger, my dear; and this is worthy Mr. Fudge.—But where is your wife, Mr. Fudge?

we are near neighbours, you know, and I see no reason why your good woman and mine should not be better acquainted.

Mr. Fudge. She is standing close by you, Sir.

Free. O, I beg pardon, my dear Madam! I did not know you. (*to Mrs. Fudge.*)—My dear, this is Mrs. Fudge. (*presenting her to Mrs. F.*)—But my good Mr. Hassock, why have not you brought your pretty daughter with you?

Mr. Hassock. So I have, your honour; this be she. (*pointing to his daughter.*)

Free. She must give me her hand: I have a girl of my own too, you see; but she does not hold up her head so well as this young lady.

(*More people still coming in.*)

Ha! welcome, my good friends! welcome, my good neighbour Huskins, and you too, my good Mrs. Huskins!——Ha, Mr. Grub! you do me honour. How do the soap-works go on? you will soon be the richest man in the country, though you do spare me a morning now and then.

Mr. Grub. (*conceitedly.*) Aye, picking up a little in my poor way, just to keep the pot boiling. (*Going up to Mrs. Freeman, and wiping his face.*) Madam, I make bold, as the fashion goes on them there occasions. (*Gives her a salute with a good loud smack, whilst she shrinks back disconcerted, and Bescatti and the Governess shrug up their shoulders, and Charlotte skulks behind their backs frightened.*)

Mr. Fudge. (*spitting out his chew of tobacco and*

wiping his mouth.) As the fashion goes round, Madam —

Free. (*preventing him as he is going up to Mrs. F.*) No, no, my good neighbours: this is too much ceremony amongst friends. Let us go into the next room, and see if there is any thing to eat: I dare say there is some cold meat and cucumber for us. Let me have the honour, Mrs. Fudge. (*They all go into the next room and seat themselves round the table. Re-enter Freeman in a great bustle.*)

More chairs and more covers, here! Thomas! Barnaby! Jenkins! (*the servants run up and down carrying things across the stage. Enter more people.*) Ha! welcome—welcome, my good friends! we were just looking for you. Go into the next room, and try if you can find any thing you like.

Voter. O, Sir, never fear but we shall find plenty of good victuals. [EXEUNT *into the next room.*

Manet Charlotte, who comes forward.

Char. La, how I should like to be a queen, and stand in my robes, and have all the people introduced to me! for then they would kiss no more than my hand, which I should hold out so. No, no; it should be so. (*stretching out her hand whilst*

Charles Baltimore, entering behind and overhearing her, takes and kisses it with a ludicrous bending of the knee.)

Charles. And which should be kissed so?

Char. (*affectedly.*) You are always so silly, Mr. Charles Baltimore.

Charles. Are you holding court here for all those good folks? I thought there was no harm in look-

ing in upon you, though I do belong to the other side. (*peeping.*) Faith they are busy enough! mercy on us, what a clattering of trenchers! How do you like them?

Char. Oh! they are such savages; I'm sure if I had not put lavender on my pocket handkerchief, like Mama, I should have fainted away.

Charles. How can you talk of fainting with cheeks like two cabbage roses?

Char. Cabbage roses!

Charles. No, no — pest take it! — I mean the pretty, delicate damask rose.

Char. La, now you are flattering me!

Charles. I am not indeed, Charlotte! you have the prettiest — (*peeping at the other room and stopping short.*)

Char. (*eagerly.*) I have the prettiest what?

Charles. Is that a venison pasty they have got yonder!

Char. Poo, never mind! — I have the prettiest what?

Charles. Yes, I mean the most beautiful (*peeping again.*) By my faith and so it is a venison pasty, and a monstrous good smell it has!

[EXIT *hastily into the eating-room.*

Char. (*looking after him.*) What a nasty creature he is! he has no more sense than one of our pointers; he's always running after a good smell.

[EXIT.

SCENE II.

An open lane near a country town. Enter BALTIMORE, who passes half way across the stage, and then stopping suddenly, shrinks back.

Balt. Ha, it is him!—I'll turn and go another way. (*Turns hastily back again, and then stops short.*) No, no, he sha'n't see me avoiding him. I'll follow Truebridge's advice, and be civil to him.—(*Enter Freeman bowing with stiff civility.*) Good morning, Sir.

Free. And the same to you, Mr. Baltimore: how does your Lady do?

Balt. And your amiable lady, Mr. Freeman? she is a great scholar I hear.

Free. (*with his face brightened up.*) You are very good to say so; she does indeed know some few things pretty well; and though we are rivals for the present, why shouldn't we act liberally and speak handsomely of one another at the same time? Does Mrs. Baltimore like pine-apples as well as she used to do?

Balt. (*shrinking back.*) No, she dislikes them very much.

Free. Don't say so now! I believe you don't like me to send them to you, but if you would just send over for them yourself when she wants them, I have mountains of them at her service.

Balt. (*with a contemptuous smile.*) Shall I send a tumbrel for them to-morrow morning? (*Free. draws back piqued.*) But you are liberal to every

body, Mr. Freeman. I hope you and your friends have got over the fatigues of your morning feast? You were at it by times I hear.

Free. Yes, we have been busy in the eating and drinking way to be sure. I don't make speeches to them, and fill their heads with fine oratory; I give them from my plain stores what they like better, Mr. Baltimore.

Balt. And what you can spare better, Mr. Freeman. It is fortunate for both parties, that your stores are more applicable to the stomach than the head.

Free. It is better, at least, than flattering them up with advertisements in the newspapers, about their great dignity and antiquity, &c. I don't spend my money in feeding other people's vanity.

Balt. No, certainly, Sir; charity begins at home; and your own has, thanked God! a very good appetite.

Free. Pamper'd vanity is a better thing perhaps than starved pride. Good morning, Sir. [EXIT.

Balt. (*looking after him.*) See how consequentially he walks now, shaking his long coatskirts with that abominable swing! I should detest my own brother if he swung himself about after that manner. — Resemblance to him do they say! I could lock myself up in a cell, if I thought so, and belabour my own shoulders with a cat-o-nine tails.

(*Enter PETER with one of his idle companions, and starts back upon seeing BALTIMORE.*

Pet. (*aside to his Com.*) Pest take it! a body can never be a little comfortable in a sly way, but there

is always some cross luck happens to him. Yonder is my master, and he thinks I am half a dozen miles off with a letter that he gave me to 'Squire Houndly. Stand before me, man ; perhaps he'll go past. (*skulking behind his Com.*)

Balt. (*seeing him.*) What, you careless rascal, are you here still, when I told you the letter was of consequence to me ? To have this stick broke over your head is less than you deserve : where have you been, sirrah ! (*Holding up his stick in a threatening manner.*)

Pet. O Lord ! your honour, if you should beat me like stock fish I must e'en tell you the truth : for as I past by the cat and bagpipes a little while ago, I could not help just setting my face in at the door to see what they were all about ; and there I found such a jolly company of 'Squire Freeman's voters, sitting round a bowlof punch, drinking his liquors and laughing at his grandeur, and making such a mockery of it, that I could not help staying to make a little merry with them myself.

Balt. (*lowering his stick.*) Art thou sure that they laugh'd at him ?—In his own inn, and over his own liquor ?

Pet. Ay, to besure, your honour : what do they care for that ? When he orders a hogshead of ale for them out of his own cellar, they call it a pack of lamb's wool from the wool chamber. Don't they, neighbour ? (*tipping the wink to his Companion.*)

Com. To be sure they do.

Balt. Ha, ha, ha ! ungrateful merry varlets ! — Well, well ! get thee along, and be more expeditious with my letters another time. (*to himself as he goes out.*) Ha, ha ! a good name for his ale truly. [EXIT.

Pet. I wonder he did not give me a little money now for such a story as this. Howsomever, it has saved my head from being broke.

Com. And that, I think, is fully as much as it is worth. I wonder you an't ashamed to behave with so little respect to a gentleman and your own master.

Pet. Fiddle faddle with all that ! do you think one gets on the blind side of a man to treat him with respect ? When I first came to live with Mr. Baltimore, I must say I was woundily afraid of his honour, but I know how to manage him now well enough.

Com. I think thou dost, indeed. Who would have thought it, that had seen what a bumpkin he took thee from the plough's tail, but a twelvemonth ago, because he could not afford to hire any more fine trained servants to wait upon him ?

Pet. Nay, I wa'n't such a simpleton as you took me for neither. I was once before that very intimate, in my fashion, with an old 'Squire of the North Country, who was in love with his grand-daughter's dairy-maid. I warrant you I know well enough how to deal with any body that has got any of them strange fancies working within them, for as great a bumpkin as you may take me to be ; and if you don't see me, ere long time goes by, make a good

penny of it too, I'll give you leave to call me a noodle. Come away to the Blue-Posts again, and have another glass, man. [EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

FREEMAN'S *library fitted up expensively with fine showy books and book-cases, &c. &c.* Enter FREEMAN and Mrs. FREEMAN, *speaking as they enter.*

Free. They sh'a'nt come again, then, since it displeases you; but they all went away in such good humour, it did my heart good to see them.

Mrs. F. Oh the Goths and the Huns! I believe the smell of their nauseous tobacco will never leave my nostrils. You don't know what I have suffered to oblige you. To any body of delicacy and refinement, it was shocking. I shall be nervous and languid for a month. But I don't complain. You know I do every thing cheerfully that can promote your interest. Oh! I am quite overcome. (*sits down languidly.*)

Free. Indeed, my dear, I know you never complain, and I am sorry I have imposed such a task upon your goodness. But the adversary gains ground upon us, and if I do not exert myself, the ancient interest of the Baltimores — the old prejudice of family, may still carry the day.

Mrs. F. (*starting up eagerly, and throwing aside her assumed languor.*) That it sha'nt do if gold and activity can prevent it! Old prejudice of family! Who has a better right than yourself to serve for the borough of Westown!

Free. So you say, my dear ; and you are generally in the right. But I don't know : I don't feel as if I did altogether right in opposing Mr. Baltimore, in his own person, in the very spot where his family has so long presided. If he did not provoke me —

Mrs. F. What, have you not got over these scruples yet ? Has not all the rancorous opposition you have met with from him wound you up to a higher pitch than this, Mr. Freeman ? It has carried you thro' with many petty struggles against his proud will already, and would you let him get the better of you now ?

Free. (*thoughtfully.*) I could have wished to have lived in peace with him.

Mrs. F. Yes, if he would have suffered you.

Free. Ay, indeed, if he would have suffered me. (*musings for some time.*) Well, it is very extraordinary this dislike which he seems to have taken to me ; it is inexplicable ! I came into his neighbourhood with the strongest desire to be upon good terms with, nay to be upon the most friendly and familiar footing with him ; yet he very soon opposed me in every thing, (*walking up and down, and then stopping short.*) I asked him to dine with me almost every day, just as one would ask their oldest and most intimate acquaintance ; and he knew very well I expected no entertainments in return, which would have been a foolish expence in his situation, for I took care in the handsomest manner to let him understand as much.

Mrs. F. Well, well, never trouble your head about that now, but think how you may be revenged upon him.

Free. Tho' his fortune was reduced, and I in possession of almost all the estates of the Baltimores, of more land, indeed, than they ever possessed, I was always at pains to assure him that I respected him as much as the richest man in the county; and yet, I cannot understand it, the more friendly and familiar I was with him, the more visibly his aversion to me increased. It is past all comprehension!

Mrs. F. Don't trouble yourself about that now.

Free. I'm sure I was ready upon every occasion to offer him my very best advice, and, after the large fortune I have acquired, I may be well supposed to be no novice in many things.

Mrs. F. O, he has no sense of obligations.

Free. Ay, and knowing how narrow his income is in respect to the style of living he has been accustomed to; when company came upon him unexpectedly, have I not sent and offered him every thing in my house, even to the best wines in my cellars, which he has pettishly and absurdly refused?

Mrs. F. O, he has no gratitude in him!

Free. If I had been distant, and stood upon the reserve with him, there might have been some cause. Well, it is altogether inexplicable!

Mrs. F. I'm sure it is not worth while to think so much about it.

Free. Ah, but I can't help thinking ! Have I not made the ground round his house, as well as my own, look like a well-weeded garden ? I have cut down the old gloomy trees ; and where he used to see nothing from his windows but a parcel of old knotted oaks shaking themselves in the wind, he now looks upon two hundred rood of the best hot-walls in the North of England, besides two new summer-houses and a green-house.

Mrs. F. O, he has no taste !

Free. The stream which I found running thro' the woods, as shaggy and as wild as if it had been in a desert island, and the foot of man never marked upon its banks, I have straightened, and levelled, and dressed, till the sides of it are as nice as a bowling-green.

Mrs. F. He has no more taste than a savage, that's certain. However, you must allow that he wants some advantages which you possess : his wife is a woman of no refinement.

Free. I don't know what you mean by refinement : She don't sing Italian and play upon the harp, I believe ; but she is a very civil, obliging, good, reasonable woman.

Mrs. F. (contemptuously.) Yes, she is a very civil, obliging, good, reasonable woman. I wonder how some mothers can neglect the education of their children so ! If she had been my daughter, I should have made a very different thing of her, indeed.

Free. I doubt nothing, my dear, of your good instructions and example. But here comes Jenkinson.

Enter JENKINSON.

How now, Jenkinson? things go on prosperously I hope.

Jen. Sir, I am concerned — or, indeed, sorry, — that is to say, I wish I could have the satisfaction to say that they do.

Free. What say you? sorry and satisfied? You are a smooth spoken man, Mr. Jenkinson; but tell me the worst at once. I thought I had been pretty sure of it as the poll stood this morning.

Jen. It would have given me great pleasure, Sir, to have confirmed that opinion; but unfortunately for you, and unpleasantly for myself—

Free. Tut, tut, speak faster, man! What is it?

Jen. An old gentlemen from Ensford, who formerly received favours from Mrs. Baltimore's father, has come many a mile across the country, out of pure good will, to vote for him, with ten or twelve distant voters at his heels; and this, I am free to confess, is a thing that was never taken into our calculation.

Free. That was very wrong tho': we should have taken everything into our calculation. Shall I lose it, think you? I would rather lose ten thousand pounds.

Mrs. F. Yes, Mr. Freeman, that is spoken like yourself.

Jen. A smaller sum than that, I am almost sure, — that is to say, I think I may have the boldness to promise, would secure it to you.

Free. How so?

THE ELECTION:

.. Mr. Baltimore, you know, has many unpleasant claims upon him.

Free. Debts, you mean : but what of that ?

Jen. Only that I can venture to assure you, many of his creditors would have the greatest pleasure in life in obliging me. And when you have bought up their claims, it will be a very simple matter just to have him laid fast for a little while. The disgrace of that situation will effectually prevent the last days of the poll from preponderating in his favour. It is the easiest thing in the world.

Free. (*shrinking back from him.*) Is that your scheme ? O fie, fie ! the rudest tongued lout in the parish would have blushed to propose it.

Mrs. F. If there should be no other alternative ?

Free. Let me lose it then ! To be a member of Parliament, and not an honest man ! O fie, fie, fie !

(*walking up and down, much disturbed.*)

Jen. To be sure ; indeed it must be confessed gentlemen have different opinions on these subjects ; and I am free to confess, that I have great pleasure, upon this occasion, in submitting to your better judgment. And now, Sir, as I am sorry to be under the necessity of hurrying away from you upon an affair of some consequence to myself, will you have the goodness to indulge me with a few moments' attention, just whilst I mention to you what I have done in regard to Southerndown church-yard ?

Free. Well, it is my duty to attend to that. Have you ordered a handsome monument to be put

up to my father's memory? Ay, to the memory of John Freeman, the weaver. They reproach me with being the son of a mechanic; but I will shew them that I am not ashamed of my origin. Ay, every soul of them shall read it if they please, "erected to his memory by his dutiful son," &c.

Jen. Yes, Sir, I have ordered a proper stone, with a neat plain tablet of marble.

Free. A plain tablet of marble! that is not what I meant. I'll have it a large and a handsome thing, with angels, and trumpets, and deaths' heads upon it, and every thing that a good handsome monument ought to have. Do you think I have made a fortune like a prince to have my father's tombstone put off with a neat plain tablet?

Mrs. F. Now, my dear, you must allow me to know rather more in matters of taste than yourself, and I assure you a plain tablet is the genteel-est and handsomest thing that can be put upon it.

Free. Is it?

Mrs. F. Indeed is it. And as for the inscription about his dutiful son and all that, I think it would be more respectful to have it put into Latin.

Free. Very well; if it is but handsome enough I don't care; so pray, Jenkinson, write again, and desire them to put a larger tablet, and to get the Curate to make the inscription, with as much Latin in it as he can conveniently put together. I should be glad likewise, if you would write to the Vicar of Blackmorton to send me the register

of my baptism : I shall want it by and by, on account of some family affairs.

Jen. I shall have the greatest pleasure in obeying your commands. Good day ! [EXIT.

Free. Where is the state of the poll, and the list of the out-standing voters ?

Mrs. F. Come to my dressing-room, and I'll shew you exactly how every thing stands. You won't surely give up your point for a little —

Free. What do you mean to say ?

Mrs. F. Nothing—nothing at all. [EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

BALTIMORE'S house. *Enter BALTIMORE, followed by DAVID, and speaking as he enters.*

Balt. And so the crowd gave three cheers when good old Humphries tottered up to the hustings to give his vote, as he declared for the grandson of his old benefactor, Mr. Legender Baltimore? I should have liked to have seen it.

Dav. O, your honour, they gave three such hearty cheers! and old goody Robson clapped her poor withered hands till the tears run over her eyes.

Balt. Did she so? She shall be remembered for this! I saw her little grandson running about the other day barefooted—he shall run about barefooted no longer.—And so my friends begin to wear a bolder face upon it?

Dav. Yes, Sir, they begin to look main pert upon it now.

Balt. Well, David, and do thou look pert upon it too. There's something for thee. (*gives him money. A noise of laughing heard without.*) Who is that without? is it not Peter's voice? Ho, Peter!

Enter PETER followed by NAT.

What were you laughing at there?

Pet. (with a broad grin.) Only, Sir, at 'Squire Freeman, he, he, he! who was riding up the Back-lane, a little while ago, on his new crop-eared hunter, as fast as he could canter, with all the skirts of his coat flapping about him, for all the world like a clucking hen upon a sow's back, he, he, he!

Balt. (with his face brightening.) Thou art pleasant, Peter; and what then?

Pet. When just turning the corner, your honour, as it might be so, my mother's brown calf, bless its snout! I shall love it for it as long as I live, set its face through the hedge, and said "Mow!"

Balt. (eagerly.) And he fell, did he?

Pet. O Lord, yes, your honour! into a good soft bed of all the rotten garbage of the village.

Balt. And you saw this, did you?

Pet. O yes, your honour, as plain as the nose on my face.

Balt. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! and you really saw it?

David. (aside to Nat.) I wonder my master can demean himself so as to listen to that knave's tales: I'm sure he was proud enough once.

Balt. (still laughing.) You really saw it?

Pet. Ay, your honour, and many more than me saw it. Didn't they, Nat?

Balt. And there were a number of people to look at him, too?

Pet. Oh! your honour, all the rag tag of the parish were grinning at him. Wan't they, Nat?

Balt. Ha, ha, ha, ha! this is excellent! ha, ha, ha! He would shake himself but ruefully before them. (*still laughing violently.*)

Pet. Ay, Sir, he shook the wet straws and the withered turnip-tops from his back. It would have done your heart good to have seen him.

Dav. Nay, you know well enough, you do, that there is nothing but a bank of dry sand in that corner. (*with some indignation to Pet.*)

Balt. (*impatiently to David.*) Poo, silly fellow, it is the dirtiest nook in the village.— And he rose and shook himself, ha, ha, ha! (*laughing still violently.*) I did not know that thou wert such a humorous fellow, Peter. Here is money for thee to drink the brown calf's health.

Pet. Ay, your honour, for certain he shall have a noggen.

Dav. (*aside.*) To think now that he should demean himself so!

Enter Mrs. BALTIMORE.

Mrs. B. (*aside to Balt.*) Mr. Freeman is at the door: should you wish to receive him? I hurried to give you notice. Will it be disagreeable to you?

Balt. O, not at all. Let him in by all means! (*to the servants.*) I am at home. [EXEUNT *Servants.*

Mrs. B. Now, this is as it should be, my dear Baltimore. I like to see you in this good temper of mind.

Balt. Say no more about that. Things go on prosperously with me at present : there is a gleam of sunshine thrown across us.

Enter FREEMAN and CHARLES BALTIMORE.

(To Free.) Good morning, Sir : a very good morning to you.

Free. I thank you, Mr. Baltimore. You see I take, notwithstanding all that is going on between us at present, the liberty of a neighbour.

Balt. (smiling.) O, no apology, Sir! I am very glad to see you. This is a fine morning for riding on horseback, Mr. Freeman : I hope you have enjoyed it.

Free. (aside to Char.) How gracious he is! We are certainly come in a lucky moment.

Char. He is in a monstrous good humour certainly ; now is the time to manage him. *(aside to Free.)*

Free. I am much obliged to you, Sir, for this good neighbourly reception ; and I flatter myself you will think I am come on a neighbourly visit too.

Balt. O certainly, Sir, but let us talk a little more of this fine morning ; it is really a very fine morning for riding on horseback : how does your crop-eared hunter do ?

Free. Eating his oats, I dare say very contentedly. All my horses are pretty well off : I buy the best oats in the country for them, and I pay the best price for them too. They are not, to be sure, so well lodged as they shall be. My archi-

tect has just given me in his plan for my new stables : two thousand pounds is the estimate, and I suppose I must allow him to go a little beyond it, to have every thing handsome and complete. That is my way. Will you look at the plan? (*taking a plan from his pocket.*)

Balt. (*drawing back with disgust.*) I have no taste for architecture.

Free. That is a pity now, for it is really a complete thing. By the bye, are not you going to do something to the roof of your offices soon? They'll be down about your ears presently, and the longer you delay that job, the heavier it will be when it comes. (*aside to Charles, on seeing Balt. bite his lips and turn away from him.*) What is the matter with him now?

Char. (*aside.*) Only a little twitching at his heart: it will soon be off again.

Mrs. Balt. (*aside to Balt.*) For heaven's sake don't let this discompose you; his absurdity makes me laugh.

Balt. (*aside.*) Does it? I did not see you laugh. Well, I am a fool to mind it thus. (*going up to Free. with affected good humour.*) I am glad to hear your horses are to be lodged in a manner suitable to their owner's dignity. But you are the best horseman too, as well as the best horse-master, in the county, though your modesty prevents you from talking of it.

Free. O dear, Sir! I am but middling in that way.

Balt. Pray don't let your diffidence wrong you.

What do you jockeys reckon the best way of managing a fiery mettled steed, when a brown calf sets his face through the hedge, and says “Mow?”

Free. Ha, ha, ha! faith you must ask your friend Mr. Saunderson that question. His crop-eared horse has thrown him in the lane a little while ago, and he has some experience in the matter. As for myself, I have the rheumatism in my arm, and I have not been on horseback for a week. (*Balt. looks mortified and disappointed.*)

Mrs. B. (to Free.) He is not hurt, I hope?

Free. No, Madam; he mounted again and rode on.

Char. It was no fault of the horse's neither, if the goose had but known how to sit on his back. He has as good blood in him as any horse in —

Free. No, no, Charles! not now if you please. (*going up frankly to Balt.*) And now, Sir, that we have had our little laugh together, and it is a long time, it must be confessed, since we have had a joke together — ha, ha, ha! I like a little joke with a friend as well as any man — ha, ha, ha!

Balt. (retreating as Free. advances.) Sir.

Free. But some how you have been too ceremonious with me, Mr. Baltimore, and I'm sure I have always wished you to consider me as a neighbour, that would be willing to do you a kind office, or lend you or any of your family a lift at any time.

(*still advancing familiarly to Balt.*)

Balt. (still retreating.) Sir, you are very gracious.

Free. So, as I said, since we have had our little joke together, I'll make no more preface about it, my good neighbour. *(still advancing as Balt. retreats, till he gets him close to the wall, and then putting out his hand to take hold of him by the buttons, Balt. shrinks to one side, and puts up his arm to defend himself.)*

Balt. (hastily.) Sir, there is no button here! *(recovering himself, and pointing in a stately manner to a chair.)* Do me the honour, Sir, to be seated and then I shall hear what you have to say.

Free. (offended.) No, Sir, I perceive that the shorter I make my visit here the more acceptable it will be; I shall therefore say what I have to say, upon my legs. *(assuming consequence.)* Sir, I have by my interest and some small degree of influence which I believe I may boast of possessing in the country, procured the nomination of a young man to a creditable and advantageous appointment in the East Indies. If you have no objection, I bestow it upon your relation, here, Mr. Charles Baltimore, of whom I have a very good opinion.

Balt. Sir, I am at a loss to conceive how you should take it into your head to concern yourself in the affairs of my family. If Mr. Charles Baltimore chooses to consider himself as no longer belonging to it, he may be glad of your protection.

Mrs. B. My dear Mr. Baltimore, how strangely you take up this matter ! Indeed, Mr. Freeman, you are very good : and pray don't believe that we are all ungrateful.

Balt. (angrily to Charles.) And you have chosen a patron, have you !

Char. I'm sure I did not think — I'm sure I should be very glad — I'm sure I don't know what to do.

Free. Good morning, Madam ; I take my leave. (*slightly to Balt.*) Good morning. [EXIT.

Char. I'm sure I don't know what to do.

Mrs. B. Whatever you do, I hope you will have the civility, at least, to see that worthy man down stairs, and thank him a hundred times over for his goodness.

Char. That I will. [EXIT *hastily.*

Mrs. B. Oh, Baltimore ! how could you treat any body so, that came to you with offers of kindness ?

Balt. (striding up and down.) What would you have had me do ? what would you have had me do, Madam ? His abominable fingers were within two inches of my nose.

Mrs. B. Oh, Baltimore, Baltimore !

[*Balt.* Leave me, Madam ! [EXIT *Mrs. B. with her handkerchief to her eyes.*

(*He still strides up and down ; then stopping suddenly to listen.*)

He's not gone yet ! I hear his voice still ! That fool, with some cursed nonsense or other, is de-

taining him still in the hall ! It is past all endurance ! Who waits there ?

Enter PETER.

What, dost thou dare to appear before me with that serpent's tongue of thine, sloughed over with lies ? You dare to bring your stories to me, do you ? (*shaking him violently by the collar.*)

Pet. Oh ! mercy, mercy, your honour ! I'm sure it was no fault of mine that it was not 'Squire Freeman that fell. I'm sure I did all I could to make him.

Balt. Do what thou can'st now, then, to save thy knave's head from the wall. (*throwing Peter violently from him after shaking him well; and exit into an inner room, flapping the door behind him with great force.*)

Pet. (*after looking ruefully, and scratching his head for some time*) Well, I sees plainly enough that a body who tells lies should look two or three ways on every side of him before he begins.

[*EXIT, very ruefully.*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *Mrs. Baltimore's dressing-room. She is discovered sitting by a table, looking over papers.*

Mrs. BALTIMORE.

Well, I have the satisfaction to find that my personal expences, for this last year, have been very moderate ; but I am resolved they shall be still more contracted. Though ruin, I fear, cannot be averted, yet, when it does come, I can lift up my unblushing head, and say, "this is no work of mine." No foolish debts of my contracting, Baltimore, shall add to the number of those claims that already so gallingly press upon your proud and irritable mind ; and will, perhaps, in the end, drive you from the long and fondly retained habitation of your forefathers. (*leans pensively upon her arm for some time, then continues to look over more papers.*)

Enter CHARLES, with a slow, sauntering step.

Char. Let me see what o'clock it is now. What says my watch to it now ? (*looking at his watch.*) Pest take it ! it is but ten minutes since I look'd last ; and I could have sworn it was as good three quarters, or, at least, half an hour, as ever clock tick'd, or ever sand-glass ran. (*yawning and stretching himself.*) Ah ! I find it has been but half an hour of a weary man's reckoning, who still sees

two long periods ycleped hours, lying between him and his dinner, like a dreary length of desert waste before the promised land. (*yawning and stretching again.*) My fishing tackle is all broke and destroyed, and 'Squire Sapling has borrowed my pointer. I have sat shaking my legs upon the corn-chest, till every horse in the stable is rubbed down, and the groom, happy dog ! has gone with his broom in his hand, to sweep out the yard and the kennel. O dear ! O dear ! O dear ! What shall I do ?

Mrs. B. (rising from the table.) Poor man ! I pity you with all my heart ; but I do think I could contrive to find employment for you, if you are inclined to it.

Char. Yes, yes ! I am inclined to it ! Idleness is tiresome enough, God wot ! I am inclined to it, be what it will. But what is it tho' ? Have you any skanes of thread to wind ?

Mrs. B. No, something better than that, Charles.

Char. What, card-boxes to paste ?

Mrs. B. Something better than that too.

Char. Poetry or advertisements to cut out of the news-paper ?

Mrs. B. No, no ; something better than all these.

Char. (eagerly.) It is some new employment then.

Mrs. B. Yes, Charles, a very new one indeed. What would you think of taking up a book and reading an hour before dinner ?

Char. (disappointed.) Pshaw! is that your fine employment? I thought I was really to have something to do. I'll e'en go to the village again, and hear stories from old Margery, about the election and the old family grandeur of the Baltimores.

Mrs. B. Nay, don't put such an affront upon my recommendation. Do take up this book, and try, for once in your life, what kind of a thing reading quietly for an hour to one's self may be. I assure you there are many good stories in it, and you will get some little insight into the affairs of mankind, by the bye.

Char. No, no; no story read can ever be like a story told by a pair of moving lips, and their two lively assistants the eyes, looking it to you all the while, and supplying every deficiency of words.

Mrs. B. But try it, only try it. You can't surely be so ungallant as to refuse me. (*Gives him a book.*)

Char. Well then, since it must be so, shew me where to begin. Some people, when they open a book, can just pop upon a good thing at once, and be diverted with it; but, I don't know how it is, whenever I open a book, I can light upon nothing but long dry prefaces and dissertations; beyond which, perhaps, there may lie, at last, some pleasant story, like a little picture-closet at the end of a long stone gallery, or like a little kernel buried in a great mountain of shells and of husks. I would not take the trouble of coming at it for all that one gets.

Mrs. B. You shall have no trouble at all. There is the place to begin at. Sit down, then, and make no more objections. (*points out the place, and returns to her papers again.*)

(*Charles sits down with his book : reads a little with one arm dangling over the back of the chair ; then changes his position, and reads a little while with the other arm over the back of the chair ; then changes his position again, and after rubbing his legs with his book hand, continues to read a little more ; then he stops, and brushes some dust off his breeches with his elbow.*)

Mrs. B. (*observing him and smiling.*) How does the reading go on ?

Char. Oh, pretty well ; I shall finish the page presently. (*he reads a little longer, still fidgetting about, and then starting up from his seat.*) By the bye, that hound of a shoemaker has forgot to send home my new boots. I must go and see after them.

Mrs. B. What could possibly bring your boots into your mind at this time, I wonder ?

Char. It is no wonder at all ; for whenever I begin to read, and that is not often, I confess, all the little odd things that have slipp'd out of my head for a month, are sure to come into it then. I must see after the boots tho'.

Mrs. B. Not just now.

Char. This very moment. There is no time to be lost. I must have them to-morrow at all events.

Good bye to you. (*looking to the window as he passes on towards the door.*) Ha! there comes a visitor for you.

Mrs. B. Who is it?

Char. It is Charlotte Freeman, walking very demurely, because she is within sight of the windows.

Mrs. B. I am sorry she is come. I have desired the servants to say I am from home. It is unpleasant to Mr. Baltimore to see any part of that family, and I have promised——no, no, I have——you must go to inquire after your boots, you say. (*A gentle tap at the door.*) Come in.

Enter CHARLOTTE.

Charl. (*going up affectionately to Mrs. B.*) I thought you would let me in. (*curtseys affectedly to Charles.*)

Mrs. B. Did the servants——

Charl. I saw no servants at all. I stole in by the little door of the shrubbery; for I did not like to go in by the great gate, lest I should meet Mr. Baltimore; and he always looks so strangely at me——But I beg pardon: I see I hurt you by saying so.

Mrs. B. Have you walked far this morning?

Charl. Only so far to see you; for you seem'd unwell when I saw you last, and I could not be happy 'till I inquired after you.

Mrs. B. You are very good, my dear Charlotte, I am very well.

Charl. (*observing her embarrass'd.*) I fear I come unseasonably.

Char. O, no! We were just wishing for some

good girl to come to us ; and when you go home again, I shall have the honour of attending you.

Charl. (affectedly.) No, I thank you, there is no occasion ; I know my way very well.

Char. But I can shew you a better way, where there are fine sloes and blackberries on the hedges, if you have a mind to gather any. Eating such sweet fruit puts people into good humour, and cures them of affectation.

Charl. (disdainfully.) I dont know what you mean, Sir, by your sloes and your blackberries, but I suppose you want to shew me the place where you cropt your blackpuppy's ears the other day, and had your fingers well bit for your pains. I wonder whether you or the puppy were in the best humour upon that occasion.

Char. Faith, the puppy and I were very much the better for a piece of your flounced furbelow, which we found upon the hedge, to bind up our wounds for us. For you have a great sense of justice, Miss Freeman ; you never take any thing off the bushes, without leaving something in return.

Charl. And you, too, Mr. Charles, are a gentleman of great honesty ; for you would not take a bit of the poor dog's ears off without leaving a bit of your own fingers in his mouth as an equivalent.

Mrs. B. How comes it that you two are always quarrelling, and yet always coming in one another's way ? (*to Char.*) You forget : you must go and see after your boots.

Char. O ! I can go to-morrow morning.

Mrs. B. But there is not a moment to be lost :

you must have them at all events, you know. No, no; no lingering here: it is an errand of necessity. (*pointing to the door.*) (*Exit Char. unwillingly.*)

Charl. I'm glad you have sent him away; he is so forward and so troublesome. Perhaps I am a little so myself just now. If I am, don't make any ceremony of sending me off; for I see, my dear Mrs. Baltimore, your spirits are not so good as they used to be. O! if I could do any thing to cheer them! (*Looking wistfully at her.*)

Mrs. B. I thank you, my good girl! you are not at all troublesome; you are very pleasant to me; and if it depended upon myself, I should like that we were often together.

Charl. (taking her hand warmly.) Should you? Well, and if it depended upon me, I should be always with you. I should go wherever you went, and do whatever you did, and wear the same caps and gowns that you wear, and look just as like you as I could. It is a sad thing that I can get to you so seldom, with those eternal lessons at home, and Mr. Baltimore's stern looks, which almost frighten me when I come here. Do you know I have often thought of writing to you, but then I don't know what to say. It is strange now! I know ladies, who love one another, write such long letters to one another every day, and yet I don't know what to say.

Mrs. B. And I have known, my dear Charlotte, ladies who did not love one another do just the same thing.

Charl. Have you, indeed ? La, that is wonderful ! But don't you very often write long letters to the friends you love most.

Mrs B. Indeed I don't write very often, nor very long letters to any body ; and yet I have some friends whom I very dearly love.

Charl. (*taking Mrs. B.'s hand and skipping about her.*) O ! I am so glad to hear that ! I thought all dear friends wrote to one another every day, and that every body knew what to say but myself. — When I am with Mama, I think it will be so difficult to become amiable and accomplished, as I ought to be, that I am quite discouraged ; but when I am with you, it appears so pleasant and so easy, that I am put quite into good spirits again. — But, no, no ! I do every thing so clumsily ! and you do every thing so well !

Mrs. B. Don't be so diffident of yourself, Charlotte : remember you are but fifteen, and I am four-and-twenty.

Charl. I wonder how I shall look when I am four-and-twenty. I'm sure, notwithstanding all the pains both Mama and my Governess take with me, I don't think I look very well at present.

Mrs. B. Nay, my good Charlotte, you look very well always, when you don't attempt to look too well. I hope to see you turn out a very agreeable woman.

Charl. Do you think so ? I am to go to public places with Mama next winter ; and I have overheard her and my Governess whispering together

as if I should have admirers coming about me then. But I don't think I shall. Do you think so?

Mrs. B. (smiling.) Indeed, I can't say: perhaps you may, and it is possible you may not; but the less you think of them, the more you will probably have.

Charl. I'm sure I think very little about them. And yet I can't help fancying to myself sometimes, how I shall behave to them.

Mrs. B. Ah! that is but a poor way of employing your fancy. Don't think too much about admirers: they won't admire you the more for that.

Charl. But I won't let them know that I think about them.

Mrs. B. But they will find it out.

Charl. Ha! but I will hold myself very high indeed, and not seem to care a farthing for one of them.

Mrs. B. But they will find it out nevertheless.

Charl. I'm sure I have heard that the young men now-a'-days are no great conjurers.

Mrs. B. That may be very true; but they are all conjurers enough to find that out, though better things should escape their penetration. (*with some alarm.*) I hear Mr. Baltimore coming.

Charl. You seem uneasy. Will he be angry to find me here?

Mrs. B. (much embarrassed.) He will be surprised, perhaps; but he won't come here — he is only passing to the library, I hope.

Charl. Ha! but he is coming though! (*creeping behind Mrs. B.*) He is just at the door. I will hide myself behind the open door of this cabinet, and do you stand before me till he goes away.

(*She skulks behind the door of an open cabinet, and Mrs. B. stands up close by her to conceal her completely.*)

Enter BALTIMORE.

Balt. The tide is running against me again; and even my own old servants, I have learnt, at this moment, are swilling themselves at the Cat and Bagpipes, with the damn'd ale and roast-beef of mine adversary. I am going to my attorney immediately; if any person on business should call in my absence, detain him till I return.

Mrs. B. Certainly. I wish you a pleasant ride. I think I shall take a little ramble presently, but shall leave your orders with the servants.

Balt. No, don't go out just now, I beg it of you. That little affected jade of Freeman's is prowling about; and I have already confessed to you, that it disturbs me to see you together.

Mrs. B. Ah! you are prejudiced: you talk without knowing her. She is a sweet-tempered, kind-hearted girl, and nature meant her for something very different from what she appears to be.

(*Charlotte behind, catches hold of Mrs. B.'s hand and kisses it.*)

Balt. Yes, nature meant her for a clumsy—

Mrs. B. Pray don't delay going to your attorney!

Balt. A clumsy hoiden only; and, under the tuition of her ridiculous mother, she assumes all the delicate airs of a fine lady.

Mrs. B. Well, well, go to your attorney: it is all very harmless.

Balt. Well, well, it is all very harmless, if you will; and I have laughed at a thousand little affected fools, nearly as absurd as herself. But when I see those broad features of her father, stamped so strongly by nature upon her common-place countenance, pretending to wear the conscious importance of superior refinement, it provokes me beyond all patience that you should be so intimate with her.

Mrs. B. She is a girl that will very much improve by any reasonable intimacy, and will very soon become like the people she is with.

Balt. Very well, let her be as little with you, then, and as much with her own foolish absurd mother as possible; and the more ridiculous they both are, the greater pleasure I shall have in seeing them any where but in your company. I assure you, I have no wish to reform them. It is one of the few consolations I receive in my intercourse with this man, to see him connected with such a couple of fools.

Mrs. B. O Baltimore! for heaven's sake stay no longer here!

Balt. Pray what is the meaning of this? are you in your senses?

Mrs. B. Scarcely, indeed, while you remain here, and talk thus.

Balt. What, does it affect you to this pitch then? Are you attached to that girl?

Mrs. B. Indeed I am. (*Charl. behind, catches Mrs. B.'s hand again, and kisses it very gratefully.*)

Balt. Well, Madam; I see plainly enough the extent of your attachment to me. (*walking up and down vehemently.*) Methinks it should have been offensive to you even to have stroked the very ears of his dog. And that excrescence, that wart, that tadpole, that worm from the adder's nest, which I abhor —

Mrs. B. For heaven's sake go away! you kill, you distract me!

Balt. Yes, yes, madam; I see plainly enough I am married to a woman who takes no common interest, who owns no sympathy with my feelings.

(*He turns upon his heel in anger to go away, whilst Charlotte springs from her hiding-place, and slipping softly after him, makes a motion with her foot as if she would give him a kick in the going out; upon which Balt. turns suddenly round and sees her. She stops short quite confounded: and he glancing a look of indignation at his wife, fixes his eyes sternly upon Charlotte, who recoiling from him step by step as he sternly frowns upon her, throws herself at last upon Mrs. B.'s neck, and bursts into tears. Balt. then turns upon his heel angrily and exit.*)

Charl. (sobbing.) I shall never be able to look up again as long as I live. There never was any body

like me; for always when I wish to behave best, something or other comes across me and I expose myself. I shall be so scorn'd and laugh'd at!—I'll never enter this house any more—Oh!—oh! oh! Some devil put it into my head, and I could not help it. I'll go home again, and never come a visiting any more—Oh! oh! oh! I am so disgraced!

Mrs. B. Be comforted, my dear Charlotte! It was but a girl's freak, and nobody shall know any thing of it. But, indeed, you had better go home.

Charl. Yes, I'll go home and never return here, any more. But, oh, my dear Mrs. Baltimore, don't despise me.

Mrs. B. No, my dear girl, I love you as much as ever.

Charl. Do you indeed? And yet I must not come to you again. O, I shall wander every morning on the side of the little stream that divides your grounds from ours; and if I could but see you sometimes on the opposite side calling over to me, I should be happy! It is so good in you to say that you love me; for I shall never love myself any more.

(*Exeunt Mrs. B. soothing and comforting Charl. as they go off.*)

SCENE II.

A small anti-room in FREEMAN'S house. Enter Mrs. FREEMAN with letters in her hand.

Mrs. Free. (*holding out her letters.*) Pretty well, I think, for one day's post. I should write to my dear Mrs. Languish too, if my extracts from Petrarch were ready.

Enter GOVERNESS in great haste.

Gov. O dear, Madame! I don't know what ting I shall do wit Miss Freeman.

Mrs. Free. What is the matter?

Gov. She come in, since a very little time from her walk, and I believe she be to see Madame Baltimore too, as drooping and as much out of spirit as a pair of ruffles wid de starch out of dem; and she sit down so, (*imitating her*) quite frompish, and won't read her lesson to me, though I speak all de good words to her dat I can.

Mrs. Free. Well, go to her again, and I'll follow you immediately, and speak to her myself.

[*Exit Governess.*

(*Mrs. Free. after putting up her letters very leisurely, and looking at one or two of them, goes out.*)

SCENE III.

CHARLOTTE is discovered sitting in a disconsolate posture, on a low stool in the middle of the room; the Governess standing by her endeavouring to soothe and coax her, whilst she hitches away from her fretfully, pushing her stool towards the front of the stage every time the Governess attempts to soothe her.

Gov. Do be de good young lady, now, and read over your lesson.

Charl. Can't you let me alone for a moment? I'm not in a humour just now.

Gov. You be in de humours, but in de bad humours, I see. I will put you in de good hu-

mours. ! Look here ! Fal, lal, de laddy, daddy (*singing fantastically.*) Why don't you smile, Miss ? You love dat air, don't you ? (*putting her hand soothingly on Charlotte's shoulder, and grinning in her face.*)

Charl. (*shaking off her hand impatiently, turning her back to her, and sitting on the other side of the stool.*) I don't like it a bit.

Gov. O, but you do ! And den de pretty steps I shew'd you ; if you would read your lesson, now, we should dance dem togeder. (*singing and dancing some French steps fantastically.* Why don't you look at me ? Don't it amuse you, miss ?

Charl. What amusement is it to me, do you think, to see a pair of old fringed shoes clattering upon the boards ?

Gov. (*shrugging her shoulders.*) Mon Dieu ! she has no taste for any of the elegancies. (*putting her hand upon Charlotte's shoulder coaxingly.*) But if you don't speak well de French, and write well de French, de pretty fine gentlemen won't admire you.

Charl. (*shaking off her hand again, and turning from her to sit on the other side of the stool.*) And what do I care for de pretty fine gentlemen, or de pretty fine ladies either ? I wish there was not such a thing in the world as either of them.

Gov. (*casting up her eyes.*) Mon Dieu ! She wish us all out of de world.

Charl. I'm sure I should live an easier life than I do, if there was not —

Enter Mrs. FREEMAN.

Mrs. Free. What freak is this you have taken into your head, Miss Freeman, not to read with Ma'moiselle. It won't do, I assure you, to follow your own whimsies thus. You must study regularly and diligently, if you would ever become an elegant and accomplished woman.

Charl. I'm sure I shall never become either elegant or accomplished. Why need I scrawl versions eternally, and drum upon the piano-forte, and draw frightful figures till my fingers ache, and make my very life irksome to me, when I know very well I shall never be better than a poor heedless creature, constantly forgetting and exposing myself, after all? I know very well I shall never be either elegant or accomplished.

Mrs Free. Why should you suppose so? there is no merit in being too diffident.

Gov. You should not tink so poôr of yourself, Miss. You come on very well. Several lady say dat you are become so like to me in all de airs, and de grace, and de manners, dat you are quite odder ting dan you were.

Charl. No wonder then that they laugh at me.

Gov. (*casting up her eyes.*) Mon Dieu! She is mad! shall I shut her up in her chamber?

Mrs. Free. Stop a little, if you please; she does not speak altogether from the purpose neither. Come, come, Miss Freeman : rouse yourself up, and have some laudable ambition : the distinction of elegant accomplishments is not to be obtained without industry and attention.

Charl. I wish I were with some of the wild people that run in the woods, and know nothing about accomplishments! I know I shall be a blundering creature all my life, getting into scrapes that no body else gets into; I know I shall. Why need I study my carriage, and pin back my shoulders, and hamper myself all day long, only to be laughed at after all?

Mrs. Free. I don't know what you may meet with when you chuse to visit by yourself, Miss Freeman; but in my company, at least, you may be satisfied upon that score.

Charl. And what satisfaction will it be to me that we are ridiculous together? I would rather be laughed at alone than have people laughing at us both, as they do.

Mrs. Free. (*with amazement.*) The creature is beside herself in good earnest! What do you mean, child? Who have you been with? Who has put these things into your head? If Mrs. Baltimore can find no better conversation for you than this kind of insolent impertinence, she is poorly employed indeed.

Charl. It was not Mrs. Baltimore that said so.

Mrs. Free. Who said so then? somebody has, I find.

Charl. It was Mr. Baltimore.

Mrs. Free. And you had the meanness to suffer such words in your presence?

Charl. It was not in my presence neither, for he did not see me.

Mrs. Free. And where was you then ?

Charl. Just behind the train of Mrs. Baltimore's gown, till he should go out again.

Mrs. Free. And so you sneaked quietly in your hiding-place, and heard all this insolent abuse ? Mean creature ! a girl of any spirit would have rushed out upon him with indignation.

Charl. And so did I rush out.

Mrs. Free. And what did you say to him ?

Charl. (*sillily.*) I did not say any thing.

Mrs. Free. I hope you resented it then, by the silent dignity of your behaviour.

Charl. (*much embarrassed.*) I'm sure I don't know — I did but give him a little make-believe kick with my slipper, as he went out at the door, when he turned round of a sudden, with a pair of terrible eyes staring upon me like the Great Mogul.

Mrs. Free. A make-believe kick ! what do you mean by that ?

Charl. La ! just a kick on — on —

Mrs. Free. On what, child ?

Charl. La ! just upon his coat behind as he went out at the door.

Mrs. F. And did you do that ? Oh ! it is enough to make one mad ! You are just fit to live with the Indians, indeed, or the wild Negroes, or the Hottentots ! To disgrace yourself thus, after all the pains I have taken with you ! It is enough to drive one mad ! Go to your room directly, and get sixteen pages of blank verse by

rote. But I'm sure you are fitter company for the pigs than the poets.

Charl. How was I to know that he had eyes in the back of his neck, and could know what was doing behind him?

Mrs. Free. He shall have eyes upon all sides of his head, if he escape from my vengeance. It shall cost him his election, let it cost me what it will (*rings the bell violently.*)—Who waits there? (*Enter a Servant.*) Order the chariot to be got ready immediately. (*Exit Servant.*) I will go to Mr. Jenkinson directly. He has already pointed out the means; and I shall find money, without Mr. Freeman's knowing any thing of the matter, to manage it all well enough.

Charl. La! I'm sure I knew well enough I did wrong; but I did not think of all this uproar about it.

Mrs. Free. Go to your own room, child: I can't abide the sight of you.

[*EXEUNT Mrs. Free. on one side of the stage, and Charl. and Governess on the other.*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *A summer apartment in BALTIMORE'S house, with a glass door opened to a lawn. The scene without is seen in the sober light of a calm summer evening, with the sun already set. Enter BALTIMORE and Mrs. BALTIMORE from an inner room.*

BALTIMORE, *speaking as they enter.*

LET us say no more about it, then. I forgive the little deceit of concealment which my temper, become too hasty of late, may, perhaps, justify. I will confess that the irritation excited in my mind by seeing that girl so frequently with you is unreasonable, is capricious. But you must bear with me a little, my Isabella. It is a part of the infirmity that oppresses me : it is the fretted edge of a deep and rankling——Come, come, come ! we'll say no more about it. Let us forswear this subject. Let us now talk, even when we are alone, of light and indifferent things.

Mrs. B. Indeed, I believe it will be safest for us, till this passing storm, it will be but a summer storm I hope, is past over our heads. (*Assuming cheerfulness.*) And now, to begin upon this salutary plan of your's without loss of time, let me boast to you of the beautiful collection of plants I have

nursed with my own hands, in a sly corner of the garden. You have never yet been to see them.

Balt. (eagerly.) Ay, even there too.

Mrs. B. What do you mean?

Balt. (peevishly.) Go to! you have heard, as well as I, of the ridiculous expence he has been at in seeds, and rare plants, and flower-roots, and nonsense; and of the learned botanist he is to pay so liberally for publishing a catalogue of them for the use of the scientific world—All that abominable ostentation. Ha, ha, ha! He does not know a nettle from a crow-foot on his native fields. Ha, ha, ha, ha!—You don't laugh, I think?

Mrs. B. We were to talk, you know, of indifferent things. But I have forgot to tell you of what really is not indifferent: I had a letter from my sister this morning, and, she says, your little godson is quite recovered from the remains of his illness. (*pauses for an answer.*)

Balt. (nodding his head, but not attending to her.)
Umph.

Mrs. B. (coaxingly.) She says he has become so chattering, and so playful, it is delightful to see him! And he talks of his godfather very often!

Balt. (nodding again.) Umph.

Mrs. B. He was always a great favourite of yours.

Balt. (breaking out vehemently.) If any man but himself had been guilty of half that ridiculous vanity, the dullest fool in the county would have laughed at him.

Mrs. B. O dear! still dwelling upon these ideas
(*He turns from her, and walks to the bottom of
the stage; she sighs deeply, and follows
him with her eyes. A long pause.*)

Enter SERVET.

Serv. (to *Balt.*) Excuse me if I intrude, Sir.
And you too, my good lady, (*bowing very low to
Mrs. B.*) Here is a letter that I received a few mo-
ments ago, and I thought it expedient and proper
that you should know its contents immediately.
(*gives the letter to Balt.*)

Balt. Let me see. (*reads.*) “ An unknown well-
wisher thinks it right to inform you, that your
friend” —

Serv. He ought to have said patron, Sir. I’m
sure, I have always been proud to name you as my
patron to every body : — the family of Baltimore
has always been such to me.

Balt. Well, well, no matter. (*reads again.*)
“ To ruin your friend, ’Squire Baltimore. His
adversary” —

Serv. Meaning Freeman, Sir.

Balt. I understand! (*reads again.*) “ His adver-
sary being busy in buying up the claims of some
of his principal creditors. If he would walk long
at large, let him walk cautiously.”

Serv. Meaning that he will lay you up, Sir.

Balt. I understand it perfectly.

Mrs. B. O no, no! Some malicious person has
written this.

Balt. Permit me, Madam, to speak to my man
of business, without interruption.

Serv. No wonder, Sir, that Mrs. Baltimore should think so. He makes such a good show with his actions, that he must set about such things very cunningly.

Balt. Yes, Servet, thou hast always had some notion of his true character.

Serv. To think that there should be such hypocrisy in the world! It grieves, it distresses me!

Balt. Pooh, man! never mind how many hypocrites there are in the world, if he be but found amongst the number.

Serv. Ay, Sir; but if he get you once into prison —

Balt. Will he not be detested for it?

Serv. But if he should take the borough from you —

Balt. Well! and if he should take my life too, would he not be hanged for it?

Serv. To be sure, there would be some satisfaction in that, if you could peep through your winding-sheet to see it.

Balt. He will now appear to the world in his true colours: I shall now speak boldly of a determined and palpable wrong: It relieves me from a heavy load. Give me thy hand, my friend Servet; thou hast brought me admirable news.

Serv. But, Sir, we must take care of ourselves; for he is come of such a low, cunning, mean set of people —

Balt. Ha! you know this, do you? You know something of his family?

Serv. Yes, I know well enough : and his father every body knows was no better than a — a — a —

Balt. Than a what? — Out with it, man !

Serv. Than a — Than a —

Balt. (eagerly.) Than a thief? Is that it? O prove to me, only prove to me, that his father was a thief, and I'll give thee all that I have in the world.

Serv. No, not absolutely that — but no better than a paltry weaver.

Balt. (disappointed.) Pooh ! I knew that before.

Serv. Yes, every body knows it, to be sure. But there is no time to be lost : I am so zealous about it, that I can't rest till I have further information. I'll take horse directly and go in quest of it. I know where to enquire, and I shall return to you without loss of time.

Balt. Do so, my good friend, and don't be afraid of bringing back what you will call bad news. I shall not shrink from it. (EXIT *Servet.*

(Turning to Mrs. B. who has been listening to their conversation with great marks of distrust and disapprobation.)

And so, Madam, you are diffident of all this?

Mrs. B. It will be impossible at this moment to make you view it in the same light that I do.

Balt. Yes, Madam, I knew it would be so with you. He has bewitched and thrown a veil over the understandings of all men ! I have perceived it long. Even from the first of his settling in the neighbourhood, my friends have begun to look on me not as they were wont to do. Even my very

tenants and dependants salute me less cheerily. He has thrown a veil over the understandings of all men ! He has estranged from me that sympathy and tenderness, which should have supported my head in the day of adversity.

Mrs. B. Ah, my dear Baltimore ! It is you who have got a veil, a thick and gloomy veil cast over your mind. That sympathy and tenderness is still the same (*pressing his hand.*) And, if the day of adversity must come, you will be convinced of it. But let us for a while give up thinking of these things : let us walk out together, and enjoy the soothing calmness of this beautiful twilight. The evening-star already looks from his peaceful sky ; no sound of busy man is to be heard ; the bat, and the beetle, and the night-fly, are abroad, and the pleasing hum of happy unseen life is in the air. Come forth, my husband. The shade of your native trees will wave over your head ; the turf your infant feet first trod will be under your steps. Come forth, my friend, and more blessed thoughts will visit you.

Balt. No, no ; my native trees and my native lawns are to me more cheerless than the dreary desert. I can enjoy nothing. The cursed neighbourhood of one obnoxious being has changed every thing for me. Would he were.—(*clenching his hands and muttering.*)

Mrs. B. O ! what are you saying ?

Balt. (*turning away from her.*) No matter what.

Enter a little Boy from the lawn by the glass-door, running wildly and frightened.

Boy. He'll be drown'd, if nobody runs to save him ! He'll be drown'd ! he'll be drown'd !

Mrs. B. Has any body fallen into the pond ?

Boy. Yes, Madam ; into the deepest part of it ; and, if nobody don't run to pull him out, he'll be drowned.

Balt. (running eagerly towards the glass-door.) I'll go. Dost thou know who it is, boy ?

Boy. Yes, to besure, Sir ; it is Squire Freeman's own self. (*Balt. starts and stops short. Mrs. B. clasping her hands and holding them up to heaven, remains in anxious suspense. Balt. after a moment's pause, rushes out quickly.*)

Mrs. B. O God ! what will this come to ! (*throws herself back into a chair, and remains stupid and motionless. The boy stands staring at her.*)

Boy. Are you not well, Ma'am ? Shall I call any body ? (*She makes no answer ; he still stands staring at her.*) She don't speak : she don't look at nothing : I will call somebody. (*Goes to the side-scene, and calls.*) Who's there, I beseech you ? O, hear me, hear me ! Who's there, I say ?

Enter Housemaid and Coachman.

Housem. What a bawling you make here, with your dusty feet, you little nasty jackanapes ! How dare you for to steal into a clean house ?

Coach. If he ben't that little devil that put the cracker under my horse's tail, I have no eyes in

my head. He is always prowling about: there is never a dog hanged nor a kitten drowned in the parish, but he must be after it.

Boy. (pointing.) Look there: what is the matter with the lady?

Housem. O mercy on us! my dear good lady: Are you sick, Ma'am? or swooning? or beside yourself? Run, Coachy, stupid oaf! and fetch us something.

Coach. I would run to the farthest nook of the earth, if I only knew what to bring. Will burnt feathers, or a little aqua-vitæ do you any good.

Mrs. B. (starting up.) Do you hear any noise? Are they coming yet? I'll go out myself. (*Endeavours to go out, but cannot. Housemaid and Coachman support her.*)

Enter DAVID hastily from the lawn.

Dav. He is saved, Madam!

Mrs. B. O, what say you, David?

Dav. He has saved 'Squire Freeman. He threw himself into the deep water, and plashed about his arms lustily, till he caught him by the hair of his head, and drew him to the bank. One minute more had made a dead man of him.

Mrs. B. Who did that? Who caught him by the hair of the head?

Dav. My master, Madam; and a brave man he is.

Mrs. B. (holding up her hands in extacy.) Thy master! ay, and my husband! and God Almighty's good creature, who has formed every

thing good ! O, yes ! he has made every being with good in it, and will at last make it perfectly so, in some way or other, known only to his wisdom. Ha ! I hear a noise on the lawn.

Boy. (running out.) I must not lose a sight of the drowned man. For he'll be as dropping wet as any corpse, I dare say ; for all that there is life in him. [EXIT.

Mrs. B. I'll go and meet them. I'm strong enough now.

Dav. Let me support you, Madam.

Housem. (to Coach. as they go out.) La ! will he be all wet, do you think, and stretched upon his back ? (EXEUNT *by the glass-door into the lawn,*

Mrs. B. supported by DAVID. Light from a window is now thrown across the path without doors, and discovers BALTIMORE and servants carrying FREEMAN into the house by another entry. The scene closes.)

SCENE II.

A room in BALTIMORE'S house. Enter SIMEON and DAVID.

Dav. Now, my old Simeon, you'll see your master as hearty, after his ducking, as if he were an otter, and could live either in the water or out of it ; though we had some trouble to bring him to his senses at first.

Sim. Ay, do let me go to him quickly. It had been a sorrowful day to this grey head if my master had —

Dav. Yes, and if my master had not, as a body may say, put his life in his hand to save him.

Sim. Very true, David, I say nothing against all that; I honour your master for it; thof I must say he has but an ungracious look with him. There is not another gentleman in the neighbourhood, thof I say it myself, that does not stop and say, "How do ye do, Old Simeon?" when he passes me.

Dav. I don't know; I am sure he used not to be ungracious. All the old folks of the parish used to thrust themselves in his way, as if it had been good for the ague, or an aching in the bones, to say, "God bless your honour."

Sim. That must have been before we came amongst you, then. Ha! here comes his Honour.

Enter FREEMAN, dressed in a night-gown, with TRUEBRIDGE and CHARLES BALTIMORE. Mrs. BALTIMORE, at the same time, enters by another door.

Sim. (*going eagerly to his master, and kissing his hand, which FREEMAN holds out to him.*) God bless and preserve your worthy Honour!

Free. I thank you, Simeon: a good God has preserved me. You have not been much alarmed, I hope?

Sim. No, Sir? I heard of your safety before I heard of your danger; but some how or other it came across my heart, for all that; and I could not but think—"I could not,—(*pauses and draws the back of his hand across his eyes.*) But the blessings of the aged and helpless have borne

you up : the water could have no commission to hurt you.

True. Well said, good Simeon ! the blessings of the aged and the helpless are of a very buoyant quality. A cork jacket is nothing to them.

Free. Do my wife and daughter know of it ?

Sim. No, please your Honour ; my mistress is not returned from her visit yet, and my poor young lady is closed up in her room with Madum-selle, taking on her book-larning, as I suppose.

Free. I'll go home then, before they know any thing of it. (*to Mrs. B.*) My dear Madam, I return you my warmest acknowledgements. You flattered me, that I should have an opportunity, before I leave the house, of thanking, once more, the brave man who has saved my life.

Mrs. B. He will come to you immediately.

Char. (*to Mrs. B.*) Faith ! I went to him myself, as you desired me, and he won't come.

Mrs. B. (*frowning significantly to Char.*) I have just come from him, and he will be here immediately.

Char. You went too, did you ? I could'nt —
(*Mrs. B. frowns again, and Char. is silent.*)

True. (*to Free.*) You had better sit down till he come.

Char. Yes, do sit in this chair in the recess ; for you don't like the light in your eyes, I perceive (*leading Free. kindly to the chair.*)

Free. I thank you. You are very good to me, friend Charles. I think you would have lent a helping hand yourself, if you had been in the

way to have saved a poor neighbour from drowning.

Char. I should have been a Pagan else. (*Free. sits down, and they all gather round him.*) Now, my good Sir, it is pleasanter to sit in a dry seat like this, with so many friendly faces round you, than to squash among the cold mud and duckweed with roaches and eels for your comrades.

Free. Indeed, friend Charles, I shan't contradict you.

Enter BALTIMORE, going directly across the stage towards the opposite door, by which Free. and the others had entered, without perceiving them in the recess.

Free. He thinks I am still in the bed-room. (*goes behind Balt. and lays his hand kindly upon his shoulder.*)

Balt. Nay, my dear Isabella! let me go by myself! I would rather encounter him alone, than when you are all staring upon me.

Free. (still holding him.) Ha, ha, ha! My brave deliverer! I have caught you.

Balt. (turning hastily about and shaking himself loose from his hold.) Ha! is it you?

Free. (stepping back disappointed.) It is me, Sir; and I flattered myself that the overflowings of a grateful heart would not be offensive.

Balt. They are not offensive, Sir! you mistake me. You are too—There is no occasion for all these thanks: I do not deserve them.

Sim. (vehemently.) Ah, but you do, Sir! and all the country round will thank you too. There is not a soul of them all, thof' he might not care a

brass penny for you before, who will not fill a bumper to your health now, for saving to them his noble and liberal honour. O, Sir! the blessings of every body will be upon your head now.

Balt. (turning away frowningly from Sim.) So, so!

Mrs. B. Old Simeon says very true : every body will bless you.

Balt. (turning away from her.) This is pleasant, indeed!

Char. I'll be hanged if every old woman in the parish don't foist you into her next Sunday's prayers, along with the Royal Family.

Balt. (turning away from Char.) Must I be beleager'd by every fool? (*goes hastily towards the door.*)

Mrs. B. (aside, running after him.) You will not go away so abruptly?

Balt. (aside to her.) Will there be no end to this damned gratitude? (*about to Free.*) Sir, I am very happy—I—I hope you will have a good sleep after this accident; and I shall be happy to hear good accounts of you to-morrow morning.

Free. No, Mr. Baltimore, we must not part thus. My gratitude for what you have done is not to be spent in words only: that is not my way. I resign to you, and resign to you most cheerfully, all my interest in the borough of Westown.

(*Balt. pauses.*)

True. That is nobly said, Mr. Freeman, and I expected it from you.

Char. (rubbing his hands, and grinning with de-

light.) I thought so!—I thought it would come to this: he has such a liberal way with him in every thing.

Balt. (half aside to Char.) Wilt thou never give over that vile habit of grinning like a dog? (*going up with a firm step to Free.*) No, Sir; we have entered the lists as fair combatants together, and neither of us, I hope (*significantly*) have taken any unfair advantage of the other. Let the most fortunate gain the day. I will never receive reward for a common office of humanity. That is not my way (*mimicking Freeman.*)

Free. Let me entreat you!

Balt. Mention it no more: I am determined.

Free. It would make me infinitely happy.

Balt. Do me the honour to believe that I speak truth, when I say, I am determined. If you give up the borough, I give it up also.

Free. Then I say no more. I leave with you the thanks of a grateful heart. I should have said, if it had been permitted me, the very grateful affection of an honest heart, that it will never forget what it owes to you but in that place where both affection and animosity are forgotten. (EXIT *with emotion, followed by Charles and Simeon.*)

Mrs. B. O Baltimore! Baltimore! Will you suffer him to go thus?

Balt. (going two or three steps after him, and stopping short.) He is gone now.

Mrs. B. No, he is not; you may easily overtake him. Do — for the love of gentleness and charity!

Balt. (going hastily towards the door, and stopping short again.) No, hang it! I can't do it now. (EXIT hastily by the opposite side.)

Mrs. B. (shaking her head.) I had great hopes from this accident: but his unhappy aversion is, I fear, incurable.

True. Don't despair yet: I prophecy better things. But do not, my dear Madam, before Baltimore at least, appear so anxious about it. It serves only to irritate him.

Mrs. B. Is it possible to be otherwise than anxious? This unlucky prejudice, gradually gaining strength from every little trivial circumstance, embitters all the comfort of our lives. And Freeman has so many good qualities—he might have been a valuable friend.

True. Very true; he is liberal, good-tempered, and benevolent: but he is vain, unpolished, and, with the aid of his ridiculous wife to encourage him, most provokingly ostentatious. You ought to make some allowance for a proud country gentleman, who now sees all the former dependants of his family ranging themselves under the patronage of a new, and, what he will falsely call, a mean man.

Mrs. B. O, I would make every allowance! but I would not encourage him in his prejudice.

True. The way to reclaim him, however, is not to run directly counter to it. I have never found him so ready to acknowledge Freeman's good qualities as when I have appeared, and have really been half provoked myself with his

vanity and magnificence. When we would help a friend out of the mire, we must often go a little way into it ourselves.

Mrs. B. I believe you are right. Ah ! True-bridge ! if you had been more amongst us lately, we should not now, perhaps, have been so unhappy. He would have listened more to you than to any other friend.

True. Have good comfort : I don't despair.

(EXEUNT.)

SCENE III.

Night. *An open space before the Blue Posts : the scene dark, except where the light gleams from the open door of the house. A noise of drinking and merriment heard within. Enter some of Baltimore's voters, &c. from the house, carrying a table, a bowl of punch and glasses, which they set down in the porch, and place themselves round on the benches at the door.*

Sailor. Now, messmates, let us set down our bowl here. We have been long enough stow'd in that there close smoky hold, while the fresh air has been playing on the decks. Let us sit down and be merry ! I am return'd home in a good jolly time, old neighbours ; let us enjoy it.

First Vote. Ay, I remember at our last election, when 'Squire Burton was chosen, we drank a hearty bowl in this very porch, and neighbour Bullock, the tanner, sat, as it were, in that very corner. Rest his soul ! he loved his country, and his king, and his cause, and his candidate, as well as any heart in Old England.

Second Vote. Ay, and he was always ready to knock any body down that was not as hearty as himself. That was what I liked in him. That was the true spirit. That was the true roast beef of Old England.

First Vote. And he had such a good knack at a toast. Come, stand up, Mr. Alderman. We have drunk already to the ancient family of the Baltimores, give us some other good public toast. You have a good knack at the business too. I would give you one myself, but then I doesn't know how to do it for want of education.

Ald. (standing up conceitedly.) May all the king, and the queen, and the royal family, and all the rest of the nobility and members of parliament, serving over them and under us be good; and may all us, serving under them again be — be — be happy and be good too, and be—and be—

Second Vote. Just as we should be.

First Vote. Ay, just so. Very well and very nicely said, Mr. Alderman!

Second Vote. But does nobody drink to the navy of old England.

Ald. Yes, man: stop a little, and I'll have a touch at that too.

First Vote. Ay, do so. I stand up for the British navy; that I do. The sea is our only true friend either by land or by water. Come, give us a sailor's song, Will Weatherall. I have lived upon dry land all my days, and never saw better than a little punt-boat shov'd across the ferry for a sixpence; but some how or other I have a kindness for

every thing that pertains to the great salt sea, with all the ships, and the waves roaring, and all that ; and whenever I sees a good heart of oak seated at an alehouse door with his glass in his hand, my heart always turns to him, an there should be a hundred men besides. Give us a song, man.

Sailor. That I will. Hang me if thou does'n't deserve to feed upon biscuit.

SONG.

*Merry mantling social bowl,
Many a cheerful kindly soul
Fills his glass from thee :
Healts go round, care is drown'd,
Every heart with lighter bound
Gen'rous feels and free.*

*Cann and beaker by thy side,
May'st thou oft' in flowing pride
Thus surrounded be :
And shame befall the narrow mind,
That to a messmate proves unkind,
Who once has fill'd his glass from thee!*

*Whate'er our state, where'er we meet,
We still with kindly welcome greet
The mate of former jollity :
Far distant, in a foreign land,
We'll give to all a brother's hand
That e'er have fill'd their glass from thee.*

Enter MARGERY, in a great fury.

Mar. Dash down your bowl, and break all your glasses in shivers! Are you sitting singing here, and 'Squire Baltimore hurried away to prison by his vile rascality creditors? Shame upon your red chops! Who pays for the liquor you are drinking?

All. You're wrong in the head, Margery.

Mar. Ye're wrong in the heart, and that's a worse thing, ungrateful punch-swillers! You would be all up on end in a moment else; for I saw them lay their detestable paws upon him with mine own eyes. Rise up every skin of you, or I'll break the bowl about your ears! I'll make the liquor mount to your noddles, I warrant you!

All. (*starting up.*) Which way did they go?

Mar. Come, follow me, and I'll shew you. Let them but come within reach of my clench'd fist, and I'll teach them to lay hands upon his honour! An esquire and a gentleman born.

(*EXEUNT, everybody following her with great noise and hubbub.*)

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A vaulted passage in a prison. Enter Keeper, with several Turnkeys bearing pots of porter, &c. for the prisoners.*

Keep. (*calling to somebody without.*) Take another pot of porter to the dog-stealer in the north ward, and a Welsh rabbit to his comrade. (*to another who enters with a covered dish.*) Where have you been all this time?

1st Turn. Waiting on the rich debtor in the best chamber; he has fallen out with his stew'd carp, because the sauce of it be'nt cook'd to his liking.

Keep. I'm sorry for that: we must spare no pains upon him.

Enter 2d Turnkey.

2d Turn. (*holding out a small jug.*) Come, come, this won't do. Transportation-Betty says, no thing but true neat Hollands for her; and this here gin you have sent her be'nt fit for a gentlewoman to drink.

Keep. Yes, yes; travell'd ladies are woundy nice. However, we must not quarrel with her neither: take it to the poor author in the debtor's ward; it will be good enough for him.

Enter TRUEBRIDGE.

True. What part of the prison is Mr. Baltimore in?

Keep. I'll shew you, Sir; follow me.

True. I thought to have found him in your own house. In the common prison?

Keep. It is his own fault, Sir; he would go no where else; and the more miserable every thing is about him, the better he likes it. His good lady could scarcely prevail upon him to let us set a couple of chairs in his room.

True. Has she been long here?

Keep. Better than an hour, I should think.

True. Does he seem much affected?

Keep. Anan, Sir?

True. I mean, much cast down.

Keep. O, Lud; no, Sir! I dare say not; you know people are used to such things every day.

True. Very true, Mr. Keeper, I forgot that—
Show me the way. [EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

A prison. BALTIMORE is discovered sitting in a thoughtful posture, with Mrs. BALTIMORE resting her arm on the back of his chair, and observing him attentively.

Ball. (after starting up with alacrity, and walking several times up and down.) And they are calling out, as they go thro' the streets, that I am a true Baltimore, and the son of their old benefactor?

Mrs. B. They are, indeed. The same party that assembled to attempt your rescue, are still parading about tumultuously, and their numbers are continually increasing.

Balt. That's right! The enemy, I hope, has heard the sound of it round his doors: they have bid him a good morrow cheerily.

Mrs. B. I don't believe they suspect him yet, for it is too bad to imagine.

Balt. (exultingly.) But they will all know it soon. All the world will know it. Man, woman, and child will know it; and even clothed in the very coats his ostentatious bounty has bestow'd upon them, the grey-headed labourers will curse him. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! How many chaldrons of coals, and hogsheads of ale, and well fatten'd oxen will, in one untoward moment, be forgotten by those ungrateful hinds! Ha, ha, ha! The very children will call to him as he passes by. Methinks I tread lightly on the floor of this dungeon, with the step of an injured man who rises from the grasp of oppression. Raise thy drooping head, my Isabella: I am a thousand times more happy than I have been: all mankind will sympathize with me now.

Mrs. B. Every honest breast, indeed, must detest baseness and hypocrisy.

Balt. Ay, thou speak'st with some energy now. Come to my heart! there will be sympathy between us. Now, thou art the wife of Baltimore! But oh! my Isabella! a poor man's wife has many duties to fulfil.

Mrs. B. None that I will not most cheerfully fulfil.

Balt. Ah! thou art a fair flower planted on an ungracious soil, and I have nursed thee rudely.

Mrs. B. O, no! you were most kind and gentle once.

Balt. And I will be so again, Isabella: for this viper gnaw'd at my heart, and I could be gentle to nothing; not even to thee. But my heart feels lighter now: I will be rough to thee no more.

Enter TRUEBRIDGE.

Ha! my friend! good morning to you! Nay, nay: (*taking his hand frankly.*) don't be afraid to look at me: I wear no desponding face upon it. (*pointing to the bare walls of his prison.*) You see what a happy thing it is to have a liberal, generous, magnificent rival to contend with. Have you seen any of my good noisy friends in your way?

True. Yes, crowds of them; and I really believe this arrest will gain you your election. There is something in man that always inclines him to the side of the oppressed.

Balt. Ay, by God! and the savage feels it more strongly than the philosopher.

True. He was always a ridiculous ostentatious fellow; but if Freeman has thought to ruin your cause by the unworthy means you hint at, he is the greatest fool as well as the greatest knave in the community.

Balt. (*ironically.*) Don't be too severe upon him! he has been bred to turn his money to good

account, you know: a purchased debt is his property as well as a bale of broadcloth; and he has a great many charitable deeds and bountiful donations to put into the balance against one little underhand act of unmanly baseness.

True. Hang all his bountiful donations! If he has done this, I will curse him by the hour-glass with any good fellow that will keep me company.

Balt. Nay, nay, nay! you are warm, True-bridge. You are of an irritable disposition. You have no charitable allowances to make for the failings of good people. Ha, ha, ha,!

Enter Turnkey.

Turn. Mr. Freeman begs to be admitted to see Mr. Baltimore.

Balt. (*stretching out his arm vehemently.*) Does he, by my conscience! (*to True.*) What think you of this?

True. If things are as we suspect, it does, indeed, exceed all ordinary calculations of effrontery.

Balt. (*to Turn.*) Let him be admitted. (*EXIT Turn.*) Now we shall see the smoothness of his snake's skin; but the switch, not the sword, shall scotch it. (*walks hastily up and down.*)

Enter FREEMAN.

Balt. (*stopping short upon his entrance, and assuming an ironical respect.*) Good morning, worthy Sir. You are the only man in England; I may say in Europe; nay, I will say in the whole habitable globe, for you love magnificence, Mr. Free-

man, whose dauntless confidence could have been wound up to the steady intrepidity of such a visit.

Free. (simply.) O, no, my friend; don't praise me more than I deserve. In courage to run to the assistance of a friend, you yourself have set me the example; and my character, I hope, will never be found deficient in any thing that becomes a good neighbour, and an honest man.

Balt. (smiling sarcastically.) Certainly, Sir; be at all pains to preserve, in the public opinion, your invaluable character. I would really advise you to have a certificate of all your eminent virtues drawn up and sign'd by every housekeeper in the parish. Your wonderful liberalities in worsted hose and linsey-woolsey petticoats; your princely subscriptions for bridges and market-places; and your noble donations to lying-in hospitals, have raised your reputation over the whole country: and if the baseness of treacherously entrapping a fair and open rival, whom you profess'd to respect, can throw any shade upon your sublime virtues, you have only to build a tower to the parish church, or a new alms-house, and that will set every thing to rights again. (*aside to True.*) Look how he draws in his detestable mouth, and stares upon me like a cat!

Free. I now perceive, Sir, the point of your discourse, and I forgive every thing that it insinuates. I might say many things, but there is just one simple answer I will return to it. All my fortune is at this moment at your disposal. You shall now be a free unencumber'd man, owing no man any

thing. For how can you be said to be indebted to one who owes even his own life to you. To tell you this, was my errand here.

Balt. (shrinking back, and then recovering himself with proud disdain.) And I, noble Sir, have one simple answer to return to you : I will rather remain in this prison till the hand of death unbolt my door than owe my enlargement to you. Your treachery and your ostentatious generosity are equally contemptible.

Free. On the word of an honest man, I have had no knowledge of this shameful arrest.

Balt. And on the word of a gentleman I believe you not.

Free. Will you put this affront upon me ?

Balt. (smiling maliciously.) Only if you are obliging enough to bear it. Do entirely as you please. *(aside to True, turning away contemptuously from Free.)* See how like a sneaking timid reptile he looks. *(walks up and down proudly.)*

Mrs. B. much alarmed. (to Free.) O leave him ! leave him ! You must not speak to him now : he knows not what he says.

True. (aside to Free.) Go away for the present, Mr. Freeman, and I will call upon you by and bye. If you are an honest man, you are a noble one.

Free. (impressively.) In simple truth, then, I am an honest man ; and shall be glad to have some discourse with you whenever you are at leisure.

[EXIT.

Balt. (stopping short in his walk, and looking

round.) Is he gone? (*to True.*) what did you think of that? Was it not admirable? (*endeavouring to laugh, but cannot.*) The devil himself will now appear a novice in hypocrisy.

True. Faith! Baltimore, I cannot think him guilty: he wears not the face of a guilty man.

(*Baltimore's countenance falls: he turns away abruptly from Truebridge, and walks up and down in disorder.*)

Mrs. B. (*perceiving Freeman's hat on the ground, which he had dropt in his confusion.*) Mr. Freeman has left his hat behind him. (*As she stoops to lift it Balt. runs furiously up to her, and prevents her.*)

Balt. Touch not the damned thing, or I will loath thee! Who waits without? hollo! Turnkey! (*Enter Turnkey; and he, giving the hat a kick with his foot, tosses it across the stage.*) Take away that abomination, do.

[*EXIT hastily into an inner apartment.*

True. Don't lose hopes of fair weather, my dear Madam, tho' we are now in the midst of the storm. Follow and soothe him, if it be possible, and I'll go in the mean time to Freeman.

[*EXEUNT severally.*

SCENE III.

An open scattered street in a small country town.

Enter JENKINSON and SERVET by opposite sides ; and are going to pass without observing one another.

Serv. (calling to Jenk.) Not so fast, Mr. Jenkinson ; I was just going to your house.

Jenk. And I was just going to do myself the pleasure to call at your's.

Serv. And you was glad to go quickly along, I believe. It would neither be pleasant nor safe for you, perhaps, to meet the new member in his chair, with all his friends round him. " Baltimore for ever !" could not sound so very pleasantly in your ears. Ay, Mr. Jenkinson ! You have made a fine hand of this business for a man of your pretensions in the profession.

Jenk. I believe, Mr. Servet, I may be permitted to assume to myself, without the imputation of vanity, as much professional dexterity in this affair as the most able of my contemporaries could have brought into the service. Every thing has been done that the very nicest manœuvres of the law would admit of. Who could have thought of a rich friend, from nobody knows where, paying Baltimore's debts for him ? Who could have thought of those fools taking him up so warmly upon his imprisonment, in manifest contradiction to the old proverb, that " rats and vermin leave a falling house ?" Who could have

thought so many of Mr. Freeman's friends would have stayed from the poll, too, after solemnly promising their votes? I am sure you are too polite not to do me the justice to confess that these things were not to be counted upon. A pinch of your snuff, if you please : you keep the best rappee of any gentleman in the country.

Serv. But what can you say for yourself in the present business, Mr. Jenkinson? I'm sure my client, Mr. Baltimore, has given you advantages enough, if you had known how to use them. Since his quarrel with Mr. Freeman in the prison, have not you and I gone between them with at least half-a-dozen of messages, unknown to their friends? and nothing but a paltry meeting with pistols to come of it after all! It is a disgrace to the profession.

Jenk. What could I have done, Mr. Servet?

Serv. What could you have done! Has not my client by my mouth, told your client in pretty plain terms, in return to all his amicable advances, that he is a liar, and a hypocrite, and a knave, and a coward; and with but very little difficulty on your part a kick or a cudgel might have been added : and do you ask me what was to be done with all this? A meeting with pistols, indeed! It is a disgrace to the profession. I once procured for a smug-faced client of mine a good douse o'the chops, which put a couple of hundred pounds into his pocket; enabled him thereby to run off with a rich heiress, and make his fortune, as you may well say, by a stroke. As for myself, I put, of course, double the sum into my own.

Jenk. Do me the favour to believe, my worthy Sir, that I have always looked up to your superior abilities with the profoundest respect. But have a little patience : and do me the honour to suppose I am not altogether a novice. We may have a duel first, and a law-suit afterwards. I suppose we shall have the pleasure of meeting at the place and hour appointed ?

Serv. Never doubt that. But I hear the crowd coming this way. (*some of the crowd begin to enter, and a great noise is heard at a distance.*) Let us avoid them, and talk further of this matter as we go.

(*EXEUNT Jenk. and Serv. Enter more of the crowd.*)

First Mob. Well, I can't say but it was a rare speech.

Second Mob. And very nicely delivered.

First Mob. Ay, he is a nice man.

First Woman. And such a sweet-faced gentleman. He'll stand by his king and country, I warrant ye.

First Mob. (*to third Mob.*) But you lost it all, neighbour Brown, you was so long of coming. "Gentlemen!" said he, and he bowed his head so, "the honour you have this day preferred me to" —

Second Mob. No, no, man ; "that you have conferred upon me."

First Mob. Well, well, where's the difference ?
"I shall ever consider upon." —

Second Mob. Reflect upon.

First Mob. Did not I say reflect upon ? "With

—with great joy ;” no “great” — I don’t know very well ; but he meant, as one should say, as how he would think upon us with good-will. And then, quoth he — but first of all you know, he said, stretching out his hand so, that “the confidence imputed to him.”

Second Mob. Tut, man ! reposed upon him.

First Mob. Did not I say so as plain as a man could speak ? — “ Was a trust that, with the greatest scrupulousness of regard ” — That is to say, you know, that he won’t sell his vote for a pension : nor give away our poor little earnings to feed a parcel of lazy placemen and courtiers, Lord help us ! And that he won’t do.

Third Mob. No, no ! I’ll answer for him. Why, I have heel-pieced his shoes for him when he was no bigger than a quart-pot.

First Mob. But what pleased me most of all was, when he waved his hands in this fashion, and said, “ Gentlemen, it has always been the pride and boasting——

Second Mob. Pride and boast.

First Mob. No, indeed ; I say pride and boasting, Thomas Truepenny ; have not I a pair of ears in my head as well as you ?

Second Mob. Well, well, boasting be it then !

First Mob. Yes, “ boasting of this honourable borough to support its own dignity and independency against all corruptful encroachments.” And then he went on to tell us, you know, all about the glory and braveness of our ancestors—O ! let him alone for a speech ! I’ll warrant ye, when he

stands up among the great men in that there house of parliament, he'll set his words together in as good a fashion as the best of them.

Second Mob. Yes, to be sure, if he does it in the fashion that you have been a-shewing us.

Second Woman. O la! there he comes, and the pretty chair and all the pretty ribbons flying about! Do come and let us run after him. (*Enter a great crowd, and BALTIMORE carried in a chair ornamented with boughs and ribbons, &c. on the back ground, and crossing over the bottom of the stage, exeunt with acclamations: the first crowd joining them.*)

SCENE IV.

An open space in a forest, surrounded with thickets, and fern, &c. Enter BALTIMORE and SERVET, looking out several ways as they enter.

Serv. Now I do see them a coming!

Balt. You have discovered them half-a-dozen of times already since we entered the forest: are they at hand?

Serv. (*still looking out thro' some bushes.*) They an't far off, but I don't know how it is, they keep always a-moving, and always a-moving, and yet they never come nearer.

Balt. He stops to take heart, perhaps. (*smiling with malicious satisfaction.*)

Serv. Yes, poor man, ha, ha, ha! his mind is disturb'd enough, no doubt. But you, Sir, are so composed! You have the true strong nerves

of a gentleman. Good blood always shews itself upon these occasions. (*looking out again.*) Yonder now I could tell you, even at this distance, by that very manner of waving his pocket handkerchief that he is in a devilish quandary.

Balt. Indeed ! dost thou already discover in him the disturbed gait of a frightened man ? This is excellent !—Let me look ! let me look ! (*looking thro' the bushes with great satisfaction and eagerness.*) Where, Servet ?

Serv. Look just between the birch-tree and the little gate.

Balt. (*peevishly.*) Pooh, nonsense ! It is a colt feeding amongst the bushes, and lashing off the flies with his tail.

(*As they are looking, enter FREEMAN and JENKINSON behind them.*)

Free. Good morning, gentlemen : I hope we have not kept you waiting.

Balt. I am here, Sir, at your request, to give you the satisfaction you require, and I have waited your time without impatience.

Free. Ah, Mr. Baltimore ! it is a cruel necessity that has compell'd me to require such a meeting as this from a man to whom I owe my life. But life, with contempt and degradation in the eye of the world annexed to it, is no benefit : you have cruelly compell'd me —

Balt. Make no apology, Sir, for the invitation you have given me to this place : it is the only one in my life that I have received from you with pleasure, and obey'd with alacrity.

Free. You will regret, perhaps, when it is too late, that some explanation, on your part, did not prevent —

Jenk. Yes, Sir, some little explanation of your words. The most honourable gentleman is always free to confess that words are not always intended to convey the meaning they may obviously seem to express.

Balt. (contemptuously.) I make no doubt, Sir, that you can find a great many different meanings to the same words. A lie may be easily turn'd into a slight mistake, or a villain into a gentleman of deep and ingenious resource, in your polite dictionary; but I am a plain, unpolish'd man, Mr. Jenkinson, and I have but one sense in which I offer what I have said by the mouth of my friend here (*pointing to Serv.*) to Mr. Freeman, and to the world, unretracted and unexplain'd (*aside to Serv.*) Does he not look pale?

Serv. O, very pale.

Free. Then, Mr. Baltimore, you compel a man of peace to be what he abhors.

Balt. I am sorry, Sir, this business is so disagreeable to you: the sooner we dispatch it, in that case, the better. Take your ground (*aside to Serv.*) Does he not look very pale?

Serv. (aside.) O, as white as a corpse.

Free. I believe you are right (*to Serv. and Jenk.*) Mark out the distance, gentlemen: you know what is generally done upon these occasions. I am altogether ignorant. You seem to be ready, Mr. Baltimore, and so am I.

Serv. (*aside to Balt.*) He would bully it out now, but he is in a great quandary for all that.

Balt. (*aside to Serv. angrily.*) No, hang him, he is as firm as a rock! (*aloud to Free.*) I am perfectly ready also, Sir. Now take your fire.

Free. No; I cannot call you out, and take the first fire myself: this does not appear to me reasonable.

Balt. You are the insulted man.

Free. Yes, but I am the challenger, and must insist on first receiving your's.

(*They take their ground, and Balt. is about to fire, when Truebridge and Charles Baltimore break in upon them through the bushes.*)

True. (*seizing Baltimore's arm.*) Hold your rash hand, madman, and make not yourself accursed!

Balt. What do you mean, Truebridge?

True. (*pointing to Free.*) That there stands before you the unknown friend ——

Free. (*to True. eagerly.*) Hold! hold! remember your promise: I have bound you to it.

True. But you release me from that promise by effecting this meeting unknown to me, when I had every claim upon your confidence. I will not hold my tongue.

Balt. For God's sake, then, tell the worst thou hast got to say, for I am distracted!

True. There stands before you, then, that unknown friend; the great uncle of your wife, as I suffered you to suspect, who has paid all your debts, open'd your prison doors, and even kept

back his own friends from the poll to make you the member for Westown. (*Balt. staggers back some paces, and the pistol falls from his hand.*)

Char. (*capering with joy.*) O, brave and noble! this makes a man's heart jump to his mouth! Come here, Mr. Spitfire, (*taking up the pistol*) we shall have no more occasion for you.

Balt. (*giving Charles an angry push, as he stoops down close by him to lift the pistol.*) Get away, damn'd fool! Does this make you happy?

True. Fie, Baltimore! It is not manly in thee to be thus overcome.

Balt. If thou had'st lodged a bullet in my brain, I had thank'd thee for it.

True. And is there nothing, then, within your breast that is generously called forth to meet the noble gratitude of a liberal mind? A mind which has strove to acquit itself of the obligation that it owes to you, and to make you ample reparation for an injury which you have suffered on his account, tho' entirely unknown to him. There is nothing in your breast that comes forth to meet such sentiments as these. Injuries and oppression are pleasing to your mind; generosity and gratitude oppress it. Are these the feelings of a brave man? Come, come! (*taking his arm gently.*)

Balt. Hold away! I am fool'd, and depress'd, and degraded! (*turns away from him abruptly.*)

True. Well, then, battle out with your own proud spirit the best way you can. Freeman, I must agree to it, is a magnificent, boasting, osten-

tatious fellow; and devil take me, if I could bear to have any reciprocity in good offices with him myself!

Balt. By the Lord! Truebridge, I'll run you thro' the body if you say that again.

True. Ha! come nearer to me then. I shall now tell Freeman of an obligation he owes to you, Baltimore, and we shall see if he bears it more graciously.

Free. I owe my life to his courage.

True. Yes, but it is not that. Come nearer me, Baltimore. (*to Free.*) You were anxious, I believe, to erect a monument to the memory of your father.

Free. Yes, Sir; and Mr. Jenkinson has written for me to have it accomplished.

True. And also, at the same time, to have a certificate of your baptism?

Free. Yes, Sir, some family business required it; but I have yet received no answer.

True. No; the clergyman to whom you wrote is my particular friend; he has made the enquiries you desired; and the result is of such a nature that he has thought it necessary to be the bearer of it himself.

Free. What may it be?

True. He is at my house, and will inform you of every thing minutely; but just at this moment, I can't help telling you myself, that to erect a monument to the memory of your father is unnecessary, as Mr. Baltimore has already piously saved you that trouble.

Free. What do you mean by that? I am a man of peace, but I will tear the heart out of any one who dares to insult my father's memory.

True. He has done it in sober piety.

Free. What! erected a monument for my father in the parish church of Southerndown?

True. No, in the parish church of Westown.

Free. My father is not buried there.

True. Ay, but he is indeed. One church, one grave, one coffin, contains both your father and his.

Free. O, God! what is this? (*Balt. starts and puts his hands before his eyes.*)

Char. I would give a thousand pounds that this were true.

True. (*to Char.*) Thou hast lost thy money then. But prithee be quiet, Charles! (*Jenkinson and Servet look ruefully upon one another.*)

Free. (*after a pause.*) Was not my mother the wife of Freeman?

True. Yes, and, I believe, his faithful wife; but she was your mother first.

Free. She was seduced and betray'd?

True. We will not, if you please, enter into that part of the story at present. My account says, that she married, after bringing you into the world, a poor but honest man; that the late Mrs. Baltimore discovered her some years afterwards, sympathised with her misfortune, and from her own pin-money, for the family affairs were even then very much involved, paid her a yearly sum

for the support and education of her son, which laid the foundation of his future wealth and prosperity.

Balt. (stepping forward with emotion.) Did my mother do this ?

True. Yes, Baltimore, she did ; till Mrs. Freeman, informed of the state of your father's affairs, with an industry that defied all pain and weariness, toiled day and night to support the aspiring views of her son, independent of a bounty which she would no longer receive, tho' it was often and warmly press'd upon her.

Free. (with emotion.) And did my mother do that ?

True. She did indeed.

Free. Then God bless her ! I do not blush to call myself her son.

True. (stretching out his hands to Balt. and Free.) Now, don't think that I am going to whine to you about natural affection, and fraternal love, and such weaknesses ; I know that you have lived in the constant practice of all manner of opposition and provocation towards one another for some time past ; you have exercised your tempers thereby, and have acquired habits that are now, perhaps, necessary for you. Far be it from me to break in upon habits and gratifications ! Only, as you are both the sons of one father, who now lies quietly in his grave, and of the good women, for I call them both good, who bore no enmity to one another, tho' placed in a situation very

favourable for its growth, do, for the love of decency, take one another by the hand, and live peaceably and respectably together! (*taking each of them by the hand.*)

Balt. (*shaking off True.*) Get away, True-bridge, and leave us to ourselves.

(*True. retires to the bottom of the stage, and makes signs for Jenk. Serv. and Char. to do so too : they all retire.*)

(*Balt. and Free. stand looking at one another for some time without speaking. Balt. then drawing nearer to Free. clears his voice, and puts on the action of one who is going to speak emphatically ; but his energy is suddenly dropt, and he turns away without speaking. He draws near him a second time, clears his voice again, and speaks in broken accents.*)

Balt. I have been to you, Mr. Freeman, most unreasonable and unjust. I have—I have—my behaviour has been stern and ungracious—But—but my heart—O! it has offended beyond—beyond even the forgiveness of a—of a——

Free. (*eagerly.*) Of a what, Mr. Baltimore?

Balt. Of a brother.

Free. God bless you for that word! Are you the first to pronounce it? Yes, I will be a brother, and a father, and a friend, and an every thing to you, as long as there is breath in my body. And tho' we do not embrace as brothers——

Balt. (*rushing into his arms.*) Ah! but we do! we do! most heartily! But I have something to

say. Let me lean against this tree for a little.
(*leans his back against a tree.*)

Free. What would you say?

Balt. (in a broken voice.) I am—I am where I ought not to be. Your generosity imposed upon you—the borough of Westown is vacant.

Free. No; it is filled with the man for whom I will henceforth canvass, thro' thick and thin, every shire, town, and village in the kingdom, if need be: the borough of Westown is not vacant.

Balt. (endeavouring to open his waistcoat and collar.) My buttons are tight over my breast: I can't get this thing from my throat. (*Free. attempts to assist him.*)

True. (running forward from the bottom of the stage.) Let me assist you, Baltimore.

Balt. No, no, hold away: he will do it for me. I feel the touch of a brother's hand near my breast, and it does me good.

True. (exulting.) Ha! is it thus with you? Then we have triumphed! conquest and victory!

Char. (tossing up his hat in the air.) Conquest and triumph and victory! O it is all right now!

True. Yes, Charles, thou may'st now be as boisterous as thou wilt.

Jenk. (aside to Serv.) We have made but a bad business of it here.

Ser. (aside to Jenk.) It was all your fault. (*They quarrel in a corner, whilst Free. and True. are occupied with Balt.; and Charles runs exultingly about, tossing his hat in the air.*)

Enter nearly at the same time, by opposite sides, Mrs. Baltimore and Mrs. Freeman, with Charlotte.

Mrs. B. (alarmed.) O! you are wounded, Baltimore.

True. No, no! there are no wounds here: we are victorious.

Mrs. B. Over whom?

True. Over a whole legion of devils! or, at least, over one great black one, who was as strong and as stubborn as a whole legion.

Mrs. B. (joyfully.) Ha! and is he overcome at last! Let me rejoice with you, my Baltimore! We have found our lost happiness again.

Balt. We have found something more, my dear Isabella: we have found a brother. (*presenting Free. to Mrs. B.*)

Mrs. B. Yes, I knew you would find in this worthy man a friend and a brother.

Balt. Nay, nay! you don't catch my meaning: he is the son of my father.

Mrs. Free. What does he say?

Char. The son of his father! My ears are ringing.

Mrs. B. (after a pause of surprise.) In sober earnest truth? (*clasping her hands together.*) O thank heaven for it! (*holding out her hand to Free.*) My friend and my brother.

Balt. (to Free.) Yes, she has always been your friend.

Free. (kissing her hand with emotion.) I know she has, and I have not been ungrateful. (*pre-*

senting Mrs. Free. to Mrs. B. and Balt.) And here is one who has not been so much your friend as she will be. Her too warm interest in a husband's success misled her into an error which she sincerely repents.

Mrs. Free. (affectedly.) Mrs. Baltimore has too much sensibility herself not to pardon the errors it occasions in others.

Mrs. B. (taking her hand.) Be assured, my dear madam, I can remember nothing with resentment that is connected with our present happiness.

Serv. (aside to Jenk.) And Mrs. Freeman is shaking hands with them too! O! there will be a stagnation to all activity! there will not be a lawsuit in the parish for a century to come!

Jenk. (aside.) Well, how could I help it? Walk this way for God's sake, or they will hear us.

(Jenk. and Ser. retire to the bottom of the stage quarrelling.)

Mrs. B. (looking round.) But there is something wanting for me still: My dear Charlotte—

Charl. (coming forward and jumping into Mrs. B.'s arms.) Yes, I was just waiting for this. O! I shall love you, and live with you, and hang about you continually! My sister, my aunty, my cousin! how many names may I call you?

Mrs. B. As many as you please. But there is another name that you must learn to say: *(leading her up to Balt.)* do you think you can look gravely in this gentleman's face and call him uncle? Nay, don't be frightened at him. *(to Balt.)* Poor girl, she has stood in awe of you intolerably.

Balt. (embracing her.) She shall stand in awe of me no more ; and, if ever I look sternly upon her again, I will cheerfully submit to whatever correction she may think proper to inflict upon me. *(smiling significantly.)*

Char. (holding out his hand to Charlotte.) And is there no such thing as cousins to be made out of all this store of relationship.

Charl. O yes ! there is a lazy, idle, good-for-nothing thing called a cousin, that we must all have some little kindness for, as in duty bound, notwithstanding.

Free. Don't mind her, my friend Charles : you shall be lazy and idle no longer. I'll find employment for you : I'll rouse you up and make a man of you. There is not a peer of the realm has it in his power to do more for his relations than I have. And by heaven I will do it too.

True. (laying his hand on Freeman's shoulder.) Gently now, my good Sir ! we know all that perfectly well.

Balt. (aside to True.) O, let him boast now, he is entitled to it.

True. (aside to Balt. giving a nod of satisfaction.) Ay, all is well I see. *(aloud.)* Now, my happy friends, if I have been of any use amongst you, shew me your gratitude by spending the rest of the day at my house, with my good friend the Vicar of Blackmorton ; who has many things to tell you.

Mrs. Free. (aside to True.) As I am the elder brother's wife, the foolish ceremony of my taking

precedence of Mrs. Baltimore will be settled accordingly ; and I'm sure it will distress me extremely.

True. (aside to her.) Don't distress yourself, Madam ; there is a bar to that, which you shall have the satisfaction of being acquainted with presently. Pray don't let your amiable delicacy distress you. (*Aloud.*) Now let us leave this happy nook. But I am resolved to have a little bower erected in this very spot, where we will all sometimes retire, whenever we find any bad dispositions stirring within us, with that book in our hands, which says, " If thy brother offend thee seven times in a day " — No, no, no ! I must not repeat sacred words with an unlicensed tongue : but I will bless God in silence for restoring a rational creature to the kindly feelings of humanity. [EXEUNT.

END OF THE ELECTION.

ETHWALD:

A TRAGEDY,
IN FIVE ACTS.

PART FIRST.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN :

OSWAL, *king of Mercia.*

EDWARD, *his nephew, and ethling or heir to the crown.*

SEAGURTH, *father to Edward.*

ETHWALD.

ETHELBERT, *a noble Thane.*

SELRED, *elder brother to Ethwald.*

MOLLO, *father to Ethwald, a Thane of small consideration.*

HEXULF, *a bigoted bishop.*

ALWY, *an artful adventurer.*

WOGGARWOLFE, *a rude marauding Thane.*

ONGAR, *a creature of Alwy's.*

Mystics and Mystic Sisters, supposed to be successors of the Druidical Diviners ; Soldiers, Attendants, &c.

WOMEN :

ELBURGA, *daughter to king Oswal.*

BERTHA, *attached to Ethwald.*

SIGURTHA, *mother to Bertha, and niece to Mollo, living in his castle, with her daughter, as part of his family.*

DWINA, *attendant on Elburga.*

Ladies, Attendants, and female Druids.

The scene is supposed to be in England, in the kingdom of Mercia, and the time near the end of the Heptarchy.

ETHWALD.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *The court of a Saxon castle. Ethwald is discovered lying upon the ground as if half asleep. The sound of a horn is heard without, at which he raises his head a little, and lays it down again. The gate of the castle opens at the bottom of the stage, and enter Selred, Ethelbert, and Attendants, as if returning from hunting. Sel. and Eth. walk forward to the front, and the others retire by different sides of the stage.*

SELRED.

THIS morning's sport hath bravely paid our toil.
Have not my dogs done credit to their breed?

Eth. I grant they have.

Sel. Mark'd you that tawny hound,
With stretched nostrils snuffing to the ground,
Who still before, with animating yell,
Like the brave leader of a warlike band,
Thro' many a mazy track his comrades led
In the right tainted path?

I would not for the weirgelt of a Thane
That noble creature barter.

Eth. I do not mean to tempt thee with the sum.
See'st thou where Ethwald, like a cottage cur
On dunghill stretch'd, half sleeping half, awake,
Doth bask his lazy carcase in the sun?
Ho! lagger there!

*(To Ethw. who just raises his head and lays it
down again. Eth. going up close to him.)*

When slowly from the plains and nether woods,
With all their winding streams and hamlets brown,
Updrawn, the morning vapour lifts its veil,
And thro' its fleecy folds, with soften'd rays,
Like a still'd infant smiling in his tears,
Looks thro' the early sun:—when from afar
The gleaming lake betrays its wide expanse,
And, lightly curling on the dewy air,
The cottage smoke doth wind its path to heaven:
When larks sing shrill, and village cocks do crow,
And lows the heifer loosen'd from her stall:
When heaven's soft breath plays on the woodman's
brow,

And ev'ry hair-bell and wild tangled flower
Smells sweetly from its cage of checker'd dew:
Ay, and when huntsmen wind the merry horn,
And from its covert starts the fearful prey;
Who, warm'd with youth's blood in his swelling
veins,

Would, like a lifeless clod, outstretched lie,
Shut up from all the fair creation offers?

(Eth. yawns and heeds him not.) He heeds me not.

Sel. I will assail him now. (*in a louder voice.*)
Ho! foxes heads our huntsman's belt adorn,
Who have thro' tangled woods and ferny moors,
With many wiles shaped out their mazy flight,
Have swam deep floods, and from the rocky brows
Of frightful precipices boldly leap'd
Into the gulph below.

Nay, e'en our lesser game hath nobly done :
Across his shoulders hang four furred feet,
That hath full twenty miles before us run
In little space. O, it was glorious!

Ethw. (*raising his head carelessly.*)
Well, well, I know that hares will swiftly run
When dogs pursue them. (*stretches himself and
goes to rest again.*)

Eth. Leave him to rest, he is not to be rous'd.

Sel. Well, be it so. By heaven, my fretted soul
Did something of this easy stupor lack,
When near the easy limits of our chace
I pass'd the frowning tower of Ruthergeld?
He hangs a helmet o'er his battlements,
As tho' he were the chief protecting Thane
Of all the country round.

I'll teach th'ennobled Coerl, within these bounds,
None may pretend in noble birth to vie
With Mollo's honour'd line !

Eth. (*proudly.*) Hast thou forgot?
Or did'st thou never hear whose blood it is
That fills these swelling veins?

Sel. I cry you mercy, Thane : I little doubt
Some brave man was the founder of your house.

Eth. Yes, such an one, at mention of whose name
The brave descendants of two hundred years
Have stately rose with more majestic step,
And proudly smiled.

Ed. Who was this lordly chieftain?

Eth. A Swabian shepherd's son, who, in dark
times,

When ruin dire menaced his native land,
With all his native lordship in his grasp,
A simple maple spear and osier shield,
Making of keen and deep sagacity,
With daring courage and exalted thoughts,
A plain and native warrant of command,
Around him gather'd all the valiant youth ;
And, after many a gallant enterprise,
Repell'd the foe, and gave his country peace.
His grateful country bless'd him for the gift,
And offer'd to his worth the regal crown.

Sel. (*bowing respectfully.*) I yield me to thy
claim.

(*Ethwald, who has raised himself up by degrees upon hearing the story, and listen'd eagerly, now starts up, impatient of the pause, and catches Eth. by the arm.*)

Ethw. And did they crown him then?

Eth. No ; with a mind above all selfish wrong,
He gen'rously the splendid gift refused :
And drawing from his distant low retreat
The only remnant of the royal race,
Did fix him firmly on his father's seat ;
Proving until his very latest breath
A true and loyal subject.

(*Ethwald's countenance changes, then turning from Eth. he slowly retires to the bottom of the stage and exit. Eth. follows him attentively with his eye as he retires.*)

Eth. Mark'd you the changes of the stripling's eye?

You do complain that he of late has grown
A musing sluggard. Selred, mark me well :
Brooding in secret, grows within his breast
That which no kindred owns to sloth or ease.
And is your father fix'd to keep him pent
Still here at home? Doth the old wizard's prophecy,
That the destruction of his noble line
Should from the valour of his youngest son,
In royal warfare, spring, still haunt his mind?
This close confinement makes the pining youth
More eager to be free.

Sel. Nay, rather say, the lore he had from thee
Hath o'er him cast this sullen gloom. Ere this,
Where was the fiercest courser of our stalls
That did not shortly under him become
As gentle as the lamb? What bow so stiff
But he would urge and strain his youthful
strength,

Till every sinew o'er his body rose,
Like to the sooty forger's swelling arm,
Until it bent to him? What flood so deep
That on its foaming waves he would not throw
His naked breast, and beat each curling surge,
Until he gain'd the far opposing shore?
But since he learnt from thee that letter'd art,
Which only sacred priests were meant to know,

See how it is, I pray ! His father's house
 Has unto him become a cheerless den.
 His pleasant tales and sprightly playful talk,
 Which still our social meals were wont to cheer,
 Now visit us but like a hasty beam
 Between the showery clouds. Nay, e'en the maid
 My careful father destines for his bride,
 That he may still retain him here at home,
 Fair as she is, receives, when she appears,
 His cold and cheerless smile.
 Surely thy penanced pilgrimage to Rome,
 And the displeasure of our holy saint,
 Might well have taught thee that such sacred art
 Was good for priests alone. Thou'st spoilt the
 youth.

Eth. I've spoilt the youth ! What think'st
 thou then of me ?

Sel. I'll not believe that thou at dead of night
 Unto dark spirits say'st unholy rhymes ;
 Nor that the torch, on holy altars burnt,
 Sinks into smoth'ring smoke at thy approach ;
 Not that foul fiends about thy castle yell,
 What time the darken'd earth is rock'd with
 storms ;
 Tho' many do such frightful credence hold,
 And sign themselves when thou dost cross their
 way.

I do not believe ———

Eth. By the bless'd light of heaven !—

Sel. I cannot think ———

Eth. By this well-proved sword !

Sel. Patience, good Thane ! I meant to speak thy praise.

Eth. My praise, say'st thou ?

Sel. Thy praise. I would have said,
“ That he who in the field so oft hath fought,
So bravely fought, and still in the honour'd cause,
Should hold unhallow'd league with damned
sprites,

I never will believe.” Yet much I grieve
That thou with bold intrusive forwardness,
Hast enter'd into that which holy men
Hold sacred for themselves ;
And that thou hast, with little prudence too,
Entrapp'd my brother with this wicked lore,
Altho' methinks thou didst not mean him harm.

Eth. I thank thee, Selred ; listen now to me,
And thou shalt hear a plain and simple tale,
As true as it is artless.

These cunning priests full loudly blast my fame,
Because that I with diligence and cost,
Have got myself instructed how to read
Our sacred scriptures, which, they would
maintain,

No eye profane may dare to violate.
If I am wrong, they have themselves to blame ;
It was their hard extortions first impell'd me
To search that precious book, from which they
draw

Their right, as they pretend, to lord it thus.
But what think'st thou, my Selred, read I there?
Of one sent down from heav'n in sov'reign pomp,
To give into the hands of leagued priests

All power to hold th' immortal soul of man
In everlasting thralldom ? O far otherwise !

(taking Selred's hand with great earnestness.)

Of one who health restored unto the sick,
Who made the lame to walk, the blind to see,
Who fed the hungry, and who rais'd the dead,
Yet had no place wherein to lay his head.

Of one from ev'ry spot of tainting sin
Holy and pure ; and yet so lenient,
That he with soft and unupbraiding love
Did woo the wand'ring sinner from his ways,
As doth the elder brother of a house
The erring stripling guide. Of one, my friend,
Wiser by far than all the sons of men,
Yet teaching ignorance in simple speech,
As thou would'st take an infant on thy lap
And lesson him with his own artless tale.

Of one so mighty
That he did say unto the raging sea
“ Be thou at peace,” and it obeyed its voice ;
Yet bow'd himself unto the painful death
That we might live. — They say that I am proud —
O ! had they like their gentle master been !
I would, with suppliant knee bent to the ground,
Have kiss'd their very feet.

But, had they been like him, they would have
pardon'd me

Ere yet my bending knee had touch'd the earth.

Sel. Forbear, nor tempt me with thy moving
words !

I'm a plain soldier, and unfit to judge
Of mysteries which but concern the learn'd.

Eth. I know thou art, nor do I mean to tempt thee.

But in thy younger brother I had mark'd
A searching mind of freer exercise,
Untrammell'd with the thoughts of other men :
And like to one, who, in a gloomy night,
Watching alone amidst a sleeping host,
Sees suddenly along the darken'd sky
Some beauteous meteor play, and with his hand
Wakens a kindred sleeper by his side
To see the glorious sight, e'en so did I.
With pains and cost I divers books procured,
Telling of wars, and arms, and famous men ;
Thinking it would his young attention rouse ;
Would combat best a learner's difficulty,
And pave the way at length for better things.
But here his seized soul has wrapp'd itself,
And from the means is heedless of the end.
If wrong I've done, I do repent me of it.
And now, good Selred, as thou'st seen me fight
Like a brave chief, and still in th' honour'd cause,
By that good token kindly think of me,
As of a man who long has suffered wrong
Rather than one deserving so to suffer.

Sel. I do, brave Ethelbert.

Eth. I thank thee, friend.

And now we'll go and wash us from this dust :
We are not fit at goodly boards to sit.
Is not your feast-hour near ?

Sel. I think it is.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

A small apartment in MOLLO's castle. Enter ETHWALD very thoughtful, who leans against a pillar for some time without speaking.

Ethw. (coming forward.) Is it delusion this?
Or wears the mind of man within itself
A conscious feeling of its destination?
What say these suddenly imposed thoughts,
Which mark such deepen'd traces on the brain
Of vivid real persuasion, as do make
My nerved foot tread firmer on the earth,
And my dilating form tower on its way?
That I am born, within these narrow walls,
The younger brother of a petty chief,
To live my term in dark obscurity,
Until some foul disease or bloody gash,
In low marauding strife, shall lay me low?
My spirit sickens at the hateful thought!
It hangs upon it with such thick oppression,
As doth the heavy, dense, sulphureous air
Upon the breath it stifles. (*Pulling up the sleeve
of his garment, and baring his right arm
from the shoulder.*)

A firmer strung, a stronger arm than this
Own'd ever valiant chief of ancient story?
And lacks my soul within, what should impel it?
Ah! but occasion, like th' unveiling moon
Which calls the advent'rer forth, did shine on
them!

I sit i'the shade! no star-beam falls on me!

(Bursts into tears, and throzes himself back against the pillar. A pause ; he then starts forward full of animation, and tosses his arms high as he speaks.)

No; storms are hush'd within their silent cave,
And unflesh'd lions slumber in the den,
But there doth come a time!

Enter BERTHA, stealing softly upon him before he is aware.

What, Bertha, is it thee who steal'st upon me?

Ber. I heard thee loud:

Conversest thou with spirits in the air?

Ethw. With those whose answ'ring voice thou
can'st not hear.

Ber. Thou hast of late the friend of such become,

And only *they*. Thou art indeed so strange
Thy very dogs have ceas'd to follow thee,
For thou no more their fawning court receiv'st,
Nor callest to them with a master's voice.
What art thou grown, since thou hast lov'd to pore
Upon those magic books?

Ethw. No matter what! a hermit an' thou wilt.

Ber. Nay, rather, by thy high assumed gait
And lofty mien, which I have mark'd of late,
Oft times thou art, within thy mind's own world,
Some king or mighty chief.

If so it be, tell me thine honour's pitch,
And I will tuck my regal mantle on,
And mate thy dignity. *(assuming much state.)*

Ethw. Out on thy foolery!

Ber. Dost thou remember
How on our throne of turf, with birchen crowns
And willow branches waving in our hands,
We shook our careless feet, and caroll'd out,
And call'd ourselves the king and queen of
Kent?

Ethw. Yes, children ever in their mimick play
Such fairy state assume.

Ber. And bearded men
Do sometimes gild the dull enchanting face
Of sombre stilly life with like conceits.
Come, an' you will we'll go to play again.
(*tripping gaily round him.*)

Ethw. Who sent thee here to gambol round
me thus?

Ber. Nay, fie upon thee! for thou know'st right
well

It is an errand of my own good will.
Knowest thou not the wand'ring clown is here,
Who doth the osier wands and rushes weave
Into all shapes: who chants gay stories too;
And who was wont to tell thee, when a boy,
Of all the bloody wars of furious Penda?
E'en now he is at work before the gate,
With heaps of pliant rushes round him strew'd;
In which birds, dogs, and children roll and nestle,
Whilst, crouching by his side, with watchful eye
The playful kitten marks each trembling rush
As he entwists his many circling bands.
Nay, men and matrons, too, around him flock,
And Ethelbert, low seated on a stone,

With arms thus cross'd, o'erlooks his curious craft.

Wilt thou not come?

Ethw. Away, I care not for it!

Ber. Nay, do not shake thy head, for thou must come.

This magic girdle will compel thy steps. (*throws a girdle round him playfully, and pulls it till it breaks.*)

Ethw. (*smiling coldly.*) Thou see'st it cannot hold me. (*Bertha's face changes immediately: she bursts into tears, and turns away to conceal it.*)

Ethw. (*soothing her.*) My gentle Bertha! little foolish maid!

Why fall those tears? wilt thou not look on me?
Dost thou not know I am a wayward man,
Sullen by fits, but meaning no unkindness?

Ber. O thou were wont to make the hall rejoice;
And cheer the gloomy face of dark December!

Ethw. And will, perhaps, again. Cheer up,
my love! (*assuming a cheerful voice.*)
And plies the wand'ring clown his pleasing craft,
Whilst dogs and men and children round him
flock?

Come, let us join them too. (*holding out his hand to her, whilst she smiles thro' her tears.*)

How course those glancing drops adown thy
cheeks,

Like to a whimp'ring child! fie on thee, Bertha!
(*wipes off her tears, and leads her out affectionately.*)

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE III.

A narrow stone gallery or passage.

(*Voice without.*) Haste, lazy comrade, there !

Enter two Servants by opposite sides, one of them carrying mats of rushes in his arms.

First Serv. Set'st thou thy feet thus softly to the ground, —

As if thou had'st been paid to count thy steps?
What made thee stay so long?

Second Serv. Heard you the news?

First Serv. The news?

Second Serv. Ay, by the mass! sharp news indeed.

And mark me well; beforehand I have said it;
Some of those spears now hanging in the hall
Will wag i' the field ere long.

First Serv. Thou hast a marv'llous gift of prophecy.

I know it well; but let us hear thy news.

Second Serv. Marry! the Britons and their restless prince,

Join'd with West Anglia's king, a goodly host,
Are now in Mercia, threat'ning all with ruin.
And over and besides, God save us all !

They are but five leagues off.

'Tis true. And over and besides again,

Our king is on his way to give them battle.

Ay, and moreover all, if the late floods
Have broken down the bridge, as it is fear'd,
He must perforce pass by our castle walls,

And then thou shalt behold a goodly shew!

First Serv. Who brought the tidings?

Second Serv. A soldier sent on horseback all
express :

E'en now I heard him tell it to the Thane,
Who cautioned me to tell it unto none,
That Ethwald might not hear it.

First Serv. And thou in sooth obey'st his
caution well.

Now hear thou this from me : thou art a lout ;
And over and besides a babbling fool ;
Ay, and moreover all, I'll break thy head
If thou dost tell again, in any wise,
The smallest tittle of it.

Second Serv. Marry ! I can be as secret as
thyself !

I tell not those who blab.

First Serv. Yes, yes, thy caution is most scrupulous ;
Thou'lt whisper it in Ethwald's hither ear
And bid the farther not to know of it.
Give me those trusses.

Second Serv. Yes, this is made for my old
master's seat,
And this, so soft, for gentle lady Bertha. (*giving
the mats.*)

And this, and this, and this for Ethelbert.
But see thou put a sprig of mountain-ash
Beneath it snugly. Dost thou understand ?

First Serv. What is thy meaning ?

Second Serv. It hath a power to cross all
wicked spells ;

So that a man may sit next stool to th' devil,
 If he can lay but slyly such a twig
 Beneath his seat, nor suffer any harm.

First Serv. I wish there were some herb of
 secret power
 To save from daily skaith of blund'ring fools :
 I know beneath whose stool it should be press'd.
 Get thee along ! the feast smokes in the hall.
 [EXEUNT.]

SCENE IV.

*A Saxon hall, with the walls hung round with
 armour. MOLLO, ETHELBERT, SELRED, ETH-
 WALD, BERTHA, SIGURTHA, and others, are dis-
 covered sitting round a table, on which stand
 goblets and flaggons, &c. after a feast.*

Eth. Nay, gentle Bertha, if thou followest him,
 Sheer off those lovely tresses from thy head,
 And with a frowning helmet shade those eyes :
 E'en with thy prowess added to his own,
 Methinks he will not be surcharg'd of means
 To earn his brilliant fortune in the field.

Ber. Nay, rather will I fill a little scrip
 With sick-men's drugs and salves for fest'ring
 wounds,

And journey by his side, a trav'lling leech.

Sel. That will, indeed, no unmeet comrade be
 For one whose fortune must be earn'd with blows
 Borne by no substitutes.

Ethw. Well jested, Thanes !
 But some, ere now, with fortune earn'd by blows

Borne by no substitutes, have placed their mates
Above the gorgeous dames of castled lords.

Cheer up, sweet Bertha !

For ev'ry drug ta'en from thy little scrip

I'll pay thee back with ——

Eth. Sticks the word i' his throat.

Sel. It is too great for utt'rance.

Eth. Here's to your growing honours, future
chief ;

And here is to the lofty dame who shall be —

(*they all drink ironically to Ethw. and Berth.*)

Mollo. (*seriously.*) Here is a father's wish for
thee, my son, (*to Ethw.*)

Better than all the glare of fleeting greatness.

Be thou at home the firm domestic prop

Of thine old father's house, in this as honour'd

As he who bears far hence advent'rous arms !

Nor think thee thus debarred from warlike
deeds :

Our neighb'ring chiefs are not too peaceable,

And much adventure breed in little space.

Ethw. What ! shall I in their low destructive
strife

Put forth my strength, and earn with valiant
deeds

The fair renown of mighty Woggarwolfe,

The flower of all those heroes ? Hateful ruffian !

He drinks men's blood and human flesh devours !

For scarce a heifer on his pasture feeds

Which hath not cost a gallant warrior's life.

I cry you mercy, father ! you are kind,

But I do lack the grace to thank you for it.

(*Mollo leans on the table and looks sad.*)

Sigur. (to Mol.) Good uncle, you are sad! Our
gen'rous Ethwald

Contemns not his domestic station here,
Tho' little willing to enrich your walls
With spoils of petty war.

Ethw. (*seeing his father sad, and assuming
cheerfulness.*)

Nay, father, if your heart is set on spoil,
Let it be Woggarwolfe's that you shall covet,
And small persuasion may suffice to tempt me.
To plunder him will be no common gain.
We feasters love the flesh of well-run game :
And, faith! the meanest beeve of all his herds
Has hoof'd it o'er as many weary miles,
With goading pike-men hollowing at his heels,
As e'er the bravest antler of the woods.
His very muttons, too, are noble beasts,
For which contending warriors have fought ;
And thrifty dames will find their fleece enrich'd
With the productions of full many a soil.

Ber. How so, my Ethwald ?

Ethw. Countest thou for nought
Furze from the upland moors, and bearded
down,

Torn from the thistles of the sandy plain ?
The sharp-tooth'd bramble of the shaggy woods
And tufted seeds from the dark marsh ? Good
sooth ;

She well may triumph in no vulgar skill

Who spins a coat from it.

And then his wardrobe, too, of costly geer,
Which from the wallets of a hundred thieves,
Has been transferring for a score of years,
In endless change, it will be noble spoil!

*(A trumpet is heard without, and Ethw. starts
from his seat.)*

Ha! 'tis the trumpet's voice!

What royal leader this way shapes his route?

(a silent pause.)

Ye answer not, and yet ye seem to know.

Enter Servants in haste.

Good fellows, what say ye?

First Serv. The king! the king! and with five
thousand men!

Second Serv. I saw his banners from the bat-
tlements

Waving between the woods.

Third Serv.

And so did I.

His spearmen onward move in dusky lines,
Like the brown reeds that skirt the winter pool.

Sel. Well, well, their needs not all this wond'-
ring din:

He passes on, and we shall do our part.

First Serv. The foe is three leagues off.

Sel. Hold thy fool's tongue! I want no in-
formation.

*(Ethwald remains for a while thoughtful, then
running eagerly to the end of the hall,
climbs up and snatches from the walls a
sword and shield, with which he is about to
run out.)*

Mollo. (tottering from his seat.)

O go not forth my rash impetuous son !
Stay yet a term beneath thy father's roof,
And, were it at the cost of half my lands,
I'll send thee out accoutred like a thane.

Ethw. No, reverend sire, these be my patrimony ! I ask of thee no more.

Ber. And wilt thou leave us ?

*Mollo. Ay, he'll break thy heart,
And lay me in the dust ! (trumpet sounds again,
and Ethw. turning hastily from them, runs out.)*

Ber. Oh ! he is gone for ever !

Eth. Patience, sweet Bertha !

*Sel. The castle gates are shut by my command,
He cannot now escape. Holla, good friends !
(to those without.)*

Enter Followers.

All quickly arm yourselves, and be prepared
To follow me before the fall of eve.

*Eth. Send out my scout to climb the farther
hill,
And spy if that my bands are yet in sight.*
[EXEUNT Followers.
Now let us try to tame this lion's whelp.

Enter Servant in haste.

*Sel. What tidings man ? Is Ethwald at the
gate ?*

*Ser. No, good my lord, nor yet within the
walls.*

Sel. What, have they open'd to him ?

*Ser. No, my Lord,
Loudly he call'd, but when it was refus'd,*

With glaring eyes, like an enchafed wolf,
He hied him where the lowest southern wall
Rises but little o'er the rugged rock ;
There, aided by a half-projecting stone,
He scal'd its height, and holding o'er his head,
His sword and shield, grasp'd in his better hand,
Swam the full moat.

Eth. (to *Sel.*) O, noble youth!
Did I not say, you might as well arrest
The fire of Heav'n within its pitchy cloud
As keep him here? (*Bertha faints away.*)
Alas, poor maid!

(*Whilst Sigurtha and Eth. &c. attend to
Bertha, enter followers and retainers, and
begin to take down the armour from the
walls. Enter WOGGARWOLFE.*)

Wog. (to *Sel.*) They would have shut your
gate upon me now,
But I, commission'd on the king's affairs,
Commanded entrance. Oswal greets you, chiefs,
And gives you orders, with your followers,
To join him speedily. (*seeing Bertha.*)
What, swooning women here?

Sel. Ethwald is gone in spite of all our care,
And she, thou know'st, my father's niece's child,
Brought up with him from early infancy,
Is therein much affected.

Wog. (*smiling.*) O, it is ever thus, I know it
well,
When striplings are concern'd! Once on a time,
A youthful chief I seiz'd in his own hall,
When, on the instant, was the floor around

With fainting maids and shrieking matrons
strew'd,
As tho' the end of all things had been link'd
Unto my fatal grasp.

Sel. (eagerly.) Thou did'st not slay him?

Wog. (smiling contemptuously.) Ask Selred if
I slew mine enemy?

Sel. Then, by heav'n's light, it was a ruffian's
deed!

Wog. I cry thee grace! wear'st thou a virgin
sword?

Maidens turn pale when they do look on blood,
And men there be who sicken at the sight,
If men they may be call'd.

Sel. Ay, men there be,
Who sicken at the sight of crimson butchery,
Yet in the battle's heat will far out-dare
A thousand shedders of unkindled blood.

Eth. (coming forward.) Peace, Thanes! this is
no time for angry words.

*(Bertha giving a deep sigh, Eth. and Sel. go
to her and leave Wog. who heeds her not,
but looks at the men taking the arms from
the walls. — Observing one who hesitates be-
tween the swords.)*

Wog. Fool, choose the other blade!
That weight of steel will noble gashes make!
Nay, rightly guided in a hand like thine,
Might cleave a man down to the nether ribs.

Sig. (to Bertha, as she is recovering.)
My gentle child, how art thou?

Ber. And no kind hand to hold him!

Eth. Be not cast down, sweet maid ; he'll soon return ;

All are not lost who join in chanceful war.

Ber. I know right well, good Thane, all are not lost.

The native children of rude jarring war,
Full oft returning from the field, become
Beneath their shading helmets aged men :
But, ah ! the kind, the playful, and the gay ;
They who have gladden'd their domestic board,
And cheer'd the winter-fire, do they return ?

(shaking her head sorrowfully.)

I grieve you all : I will no more complain.

Dear mother, lead me hence. *(to Sig.)*

(To Sel.) I thank you, gentle Selred, this suffices.

[EXEUNT Bertha, supported by Sigurtha.

Sel. *(to Mollo, who has sat for some time with his face cover'd.)* What, so o'ercome, my father?

Moll. I am o'ercome, my son ; lend me thine arm.

[EXEUNT.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A forest : the view of an abbey with its spires in the back ground. Enter the King, attended by SEAGURTH and several Thanes and followers, some of them wounded, and their wounds bound up, as after a battle. A flourish of trumpets : the King stretches out his arm in the action of command ; the trumpets cease, and they all halt.*

King. Companions of this rough and bloody day,
Beneath the kindly shelter of this wood
A while repose, until our eager youth,
Shall, from the widely spread pursuit returned,
Rejoin our standards.

Brave Seneschal, thou'rt weak with loss of blood ;
Forbear attendance. Ay, and thou, good Bald-
rick :

And thou, (*to another,*) and all of you.

Sen. No, gracious king ;
The sight of you, unhurt, doth make the blood
That in our veins remains so kindly glow,
We cannot faint.

King. Thanks, noble chiefs ! dear is the gain
I earn,
Purchased with blood so precious. Who are those

Who thitherward in long procession move ?

Sen. It is the pious brethren, as I guess,
Come forth to meet you from yon neighb'ring
abbey,

And at their head the holy Hexulf comes.

Enter HEXULF and Monks.

Hex. Accept our humble greetings, royal sire!
Victorious be your arms ! and in the dust
Low be your foes, as in this glorious day !
Favour'd of heav'n, and of St. Alban, hail !

King. I thank your kindly zeal, my rev'rend
father ;
And from these holy brethren do accept
With thanks this token of good will, not doubting
That much I am beholden to your prayers.

Hex. In truth, most gracious king, your armed
host
Has not more surely in your cause prevail'd
Than hath our joint petition, offer'd up
With holy fervour, most importunate.
Soon as the heav'n-rai's'd voices sweetly reach'd
The echoing arches of yon sacred roofs,
Saint Alban heard, and to your favour'd side
Courage and strength, the soul of battle, sent ;
Fear and distraction to th' opposing foe.

King. Ah, then, good father, and ye pious
monks !
Would that ye had begun your prayers the sooner !
For long in doubtful scales the battle hung ;
And of the men who, with this morning's sun,
Buckled their harness on to follow me,

Full many a valiant warriour, on his back
Lies stiff'ning to the wind.

Hex. The wicked sprite in ev'ry armed host
Will find his friends ; who doubtless for a time
May counterpoise the prayers of holy men.
There are among your troops, I question not,
Many who do our sacred rites contemn :
Many who have blasphem'd — Ay, good my Lord ;
And many holding baleful heresies.
Fought Ethelbert, of Sexford, in your host ?

King. He did, my rev'rend father, bravely
fought :

To him and valiant Selred, Mollo's son,
Belong the second honours of the day.

(*Hexulf looks abash'd and is silent.*)

*Enter EDWARD attended, who, after making his
obeisance to the King, runs up eagerly to Sea-
gurth.*

Edw. You are not wounded, father ?

Sea. No, my boy.

Edw. Thanks to preserving goodness ! Noble
'Thanes,

It grieves me much to see those swathed limbs.
War wears á horrid, yet alluring face.

(*To King.*) Your friends, my Lord, have done
me great despite.

Had they not long detain'd me on the way,
I should have been with you before the battle.

King. Complain not, youth ; they had, in this,
commands

Too high to be disputed. And 'tis well,
For we have had a rough and bloody day.

Edw. Ha! is it so? But you have been victorious.

How went the field?

Sea. Loud rose our battle's sound, and for a while

The Mercians bravely fought; when all at once,
From some unlook'd-for cause, as yet unknown,
A powerful panic seiz'd our better wing,
Which, back recoiling, turn'd and basely fled.
Touch'd quickly with a seeming sympathy,
Our centre-force began, in lax'd strength,
To yield contended space. — So stood the field;
When on a sudden, like those warriour spirits,
Whose scatter'd locks the streamy light'ning is,
Whose spear the bolt of heaven; such as the
seer

In 'tranced gaze beholds midst hurtling storms,
Rush'd forth a youth unknown, and in a pass,
Narrow and steep, took his determin'd stand.
His beck'ning hand and loud commanding voice
Constrain'd our flying soldiers from behind,
And the sharp point of his opposing spear
Met the pale rout before.

The dark returning battle thicken'd round him.
Deeds of amazement wrought his mighty arm;
Rapid, resistless, terrible.

High rose each warlike bosom at the sight,
And Mercia, like a broad encreasing wave,
Up swell'd into a hugely billow'd height,
O'erwhelming in its might all lesser things,
Upon the foe return'd. Selred and Ethelbert
Fell on their weaken'd flank. Confusion, then,

And rout and horrid slaughter fill'd the field :
Wide spread the keen pursuit ; the day is ours ;
Yet many a noble Mercian strews the plain.

Edw. (eagerly.) But the young hero fell not?

Sea. No, my son.

Edw. Then bless'd be heav'n! there beats no
noble heart

Which shall not henceforth love him as a
brother.

Would he were come unhurt from the pursuit !
O that I had beheld him in his might,
When the dark battle turn'd !

Sea. Your wish is soon fulfill'd, my eager boy ;
For here, in truth, the youthful warrior comes,
And, captive by his side, the British Prince.

*Enter ETHWALD with the British Prince prisoner,
accompanied by SELRED and ETHELBERT, and
presents his prisoner to the King.*

King. (to Prince.) Prince of the Britons, clear
thy cloudy brow ;

The varied fate of war the bravest prove.

And tho' I might complain that thy aggressions
Have burnt my towns, and filled my land with
blood,

Thy state forbids it. Here, good Seneschal,
Receive your charge, and let him know no change
Unsuited to a prince. (*To Ethwald.*)

And thou, brave warrior, whose youthful arm
Has brought unto thy king so high a gift,
Say, what proud man may lift his honour'd head,
And boast he is thy father.

Ethw. A Thane, my Lord, forgotten and retired;
I am the youngest son of aged Mollo,
And Ethwald is my name.

King. Youngest in years, tho' not in honour,
youth,
E'en tho' the valiant Selred is thy brother. (*turning
to Selred.*)

And now be thou the first and noble root,
From which a noble race shall take its growth,
Wearing thy honours proudly!
Of Marnieth's earldom be thou the Lord!
For well I know the council of the states
Will not refuse to ratify my grant.
And thou, brave Ethelbert, and Selred, too,
Ye well have earn'd a noble recompense,
And shall not be forgot. Come hither, Edward;
Take thou this hero's hand; and, noble Ethwald,
Thus let the kingdom's ethling join with me
In honouring thy worth.

(*Edward, who has gazed at some distance upon
Ethwald, springing forward eagerly.*)

Give him my hand, my Lord! have you not said
That I should fold him to my burning heart?
(*Embraces Ethw.*) Most valiant, Ethwald,
Fain would I speak the thoughts I bear to thee,
But they do choke and flutter in my throat,
And make me like a child. (*passing his hand
across his eyes.*)

Ethw. (*kissing Edward's hand.*) I am repaid
beyond a kingdom's worth.

Edw. (*to Sea. bounding joyfully.*) Father, have
you embraced him?

Ethwald, my father is a valiant man. (*Sea. embraces Ethw. but not so eagerly as Edw.*)

King. (*to Ethw.*) Brave youth, with you, and with your noble friends,

I shall, ere long, have further conference. (*retires to the bottom of the stage with Hexulf.*)

(*Edward, after gazing with admiration upon Ethw. puts his hand upon his head, as if to measure his height; then upon both his shoulders, as if he were considering the breadth of his chest; then steps some paces back and gazes at him again.*)

Edw. How tall and strong thou art? broad is thy chest:

Stretch forth, I pray, that arm of mighty deeds.

(*Ethw. smiles and stretches out his arm; Edw. looks at it, and then at his own.*)

Would I were nerv'd like thee!

(*Taking Ethw.'s sword.*) It is of weight to suit no vulgar arm.

(*Returning it.*) There, hero; graceful is the sword of war

In its bold master's grasp.

Ethw. Nay, good my Lord, if you will honour me,

It does too well your noble hand become

To be return'd to mine.

Edw. Ha! say'st thou so? Yes, I will keep thy pledge.

Perhaps my arm — Ah, no! it will not be!

But what returning token can I give?

I have bright spears and shields, and shining blades,
But nought ennobled by the owner's use.

(Takes a bracelet from his arm and fastens it round Ethwald's.)

King. *(advancing from the bottom of the stage.)*
My worthy chiefs and Thanes, the night wears on,
The rev'rend bishop, and these pious men,
Beneath their fane give hospitality,
And woo us to accept it for the night.

Sea. I thought, my Lord, you meant to pass
the night

With your brave soldiers in the open field :
Already they have learnt the pleasing tale.
Shall I unsay it ?

King. Nay, that were unfit.

I pray you pardon me, my rev'rend father !
I cannot house with you, it were unfit.

Hex. Should not your greatness spend the
night with those,

To whom, in truth, you owe the victory ?
We chant at midnight to St. Alban's praise :
Surely my Lord regards those sacred things.

(Whispers the King.)

King. Brave Seagurth, there are reasons of
good weight

Why I should lay aside my first intent.

Let all these wounded chieftains follow me :

The rest who list may keep the open field.

(To Edw.) Nephew, thou must not prove a
soldier's hardships,

Ere thou hast earn'd a soldier's name. Nay, nay,
It must be so. *(EXEUNT King, wounded Chiefs,*

Hexulf, and Monks, followed by Edward
very unwillingly.)

Sea. Who loves a soldier's pillow, follow me.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

*The outside of MOLLO's castle. BERTHA, SIGURTHA,
and others discovered on the walls, and several
Servants and Retainers standing by the gate
below.*

Berth. O, will they ne'er appear? I'll look no
more ;

Mine eager gazing but retards their coming.

(Retires and immediately returns again.)

Holla, good Murdoch! (to a Servant below.)

Thou put'st thy hand above thy sunned eyes :
Dost thou descry them ?

First Ser. Mercy, gentle lady,
If you descry them not from that high perch,
How should I from my level station here ?

Sig. (to Berth.) Go in, my child, thou art worn
out with watching.

(Berth. retires, and 2d Servant goes at some
distance from the walls and looks out an-
other way.)

Sec. Ser. Here comes the noble Selred.

(All call out.) Noble Selred !

Berth. (returning upon the wall.) What, Eth-
wald, say ye ?

Sig. No, it is Selred.

Enter SELRED, with followers, and looks up to the walls, where Sigurtha waves her hand.

Sig. Welcome, brave Selred ! welcome all thy band !

How far are they behind for whom we watch ?

Sel. Two little miles or less. Methinks ere this Their van should be in sight.

My messenger inform'd you ?

Sig.

Oh, he did !

Sel. Where is my father ?

Sig. He rests within, spent with a fearful joy,
And silent tears steal down his furrow'd cheeks.

Sel. I must confer with him. The king intends
To stop and do him honour on his march,
But enters not our walls.

[*EXEUNT into the castle.*]

SCENE III.

A chamber in the castle. Enter SIGURTHA and BERTHA, speaking as they enter.

Berth. Nay, mother, say not so : was he not wont,

If but returning from the daily chace,
To send an upward glance unto that tower ?
There well he knew, or late or cold the hour,
His eye should find me.

Sig. My gentle Bertha, be not thus disturb'd.
Such busy scenes, such new unlook'd-for things
Ruffle the flowing stream of habit ; men
Will then forgetful seem, tho' not unkind.

Berth. Think'st thou ? (*shaking her head.*)
I saw him by his sovereign stand,

And O, how graceful ! every eye to him
 Wasturn'd, and every face smil'd honours on him ;
 Yet his proud station quickly did he leave
 To greet his humbler friends who stood aloof.
 The meanest follower of these walls, already,
 Some mark of kind acknowledgment hath had—
 He look'd not up—I am alone forgotten!

Sig. Be patient, child : he will not long delay
 To seek thee in thy modest privacy ;
 Approving more to see thee here retired
 Than, boldly to the army's eye exposed,
 Greeting his first approach. I, the mean while,
 Intrusted am with orders from the Thane,
 Which must not be neglected. [EXIT.

Berth. (*after walking up and down, agitated,
 and frequently stopping to listen.*)

Ah, no ! deceiv'd again ! I need not listen !
 No bounding steps approach.

(*She sits down despondingly. Enter ETH-
 WALD behind, and steals softly up to her.*)

Ethw. Bertha !

Berth. (*starting up.*) My Ethwald ! (*he holds
 out his arms to her joyfully, and she bursts
 into tears.*)

Ethw. Thou dost not grieve that I am safe re-
 turn'd ?

Berth. O no ! I do not grieve, yet I must
 weep.

Hast thou, in truth, been kind ? I will not chide :
 I cannot do it now.

Ethw. O, fie upon thee ! like a wayward child
 To look upon me thus ! cheer up, my love.

(He smiles upon her joyfully, and her countenance brightens. She then puts her hand upon his arm, and, stepping back a little space, surveys him with delight.)

Berth. Thou man of mighty deeds !

Thou, whom the brave shall love and princes honour !

Dost thou, in truth, return to me again,
Mine own, my very Ethwald ?

Ethw. No, that were paltry : I return to thee
A thousand fold the lover thou hast known me.
I have, of late, been careless of thee, Bertha.
The hopeless calm of dull obscurity,
Like the thick vapours of a stagnant pool,
Oppress'd my heart and smother'd kind affec-
tions ;

But now th' enlivening breeze of fortune wakes
My torpid soul — When did I ever fold thee
To such a warm and bounding heart as this ?

(Embraces her.)

The king has given me Mairnieth's earldom —
Nay, smile my Bertha !

Berth. So I do, my Ethwald.

Ethw. The noble Ethling greatly honours me
With precious tokens : nay, the very soldiers
Do cock their pointed weapons as I pass ;
As tho' it were to say, “ there goes the man
That we would cheerly follow.”

Unto what end these fair beginnings point
I know not—but of this I am assured,
There is a course of honour lies before me,

Be it with dangers, toil, or pain beset,
Which I will boldly tread. Smiles not my love?

Berth. I should, in truth : but how is this ?
methinks

Thou ever look'st upon the things to come,
I on the past. A great and honour'd man
I know thou'lt be : but O, bethink thee, then !
How once thou wert, within these happy walls,
A little cheerful boy, with curly pate,
Who led the infant Bertha by the hand,
Storing her lap with ev'ry gaudy flower ;
With speckled eggs stol'n from the hedgeling's
nest,

And berries from the tree : ay, think on this,
And then I know thou'lt love me !

(*Trumpet sounds. Catching hold of him eagerly.*)
Hear'st thou that sound ? The blessed saints
preserve thee !

Must thou depart so soon ?

Ethw. Yes, of necessity : reasons of weight
Constrain the king, and I, new in his service,
Must seem to follow him with willing steps.
But go thou with me to the castle gate.
We will not part until the latest moment.

Berth. Yet stop, I pray, thou must receive my
pledge.

See'st thou this woven band of many dyes,
Like to a mottled snake ? its shiny woof
Was whiten'd in the pearly dew of eve,
Beneath the silver moon : its varied warp
Was dyed with potent herbs, at midnight cull'd.

It hath a wond'rous charm: the breast that wears
it

No change of soft affection ever knows.

Ethw. (receiving it with a smile.) I'll wear it,

Bertha. *(Trumpet sounds.)*

Hark! it calls me hence.

Berth. O go not yet! here is another gift,

This ring enrich'd with stone of basilisk,

Whenever press'd by the kind wearer's hand,

Presents the giver's image to his mind.

Wilt thou not wear it?

Ethw. (receiving it.) Yes, and press it too.

Berth. And in this purse—*(taking out a purse.)*

Ethw. What! still another charm? *(laughing.)*

Thou simple maid!

Dost thou believe that witch'd geer like this

Hath power a lover faithful to retain,

More than thy gentle self?

Berth. Nay, laugh, but wear them.

Eth. I will, my love, since thou wilt have it so.

(Putting them in his breast.) Here are they lodged,

and cursed be the hand

That plucks them forth! And now receive my
pledge.

It is a jewel of no vulgar worth: *(ties it on her arm.)*

Wear it and think of me. But yet, belike,

It must be steep'd into some wizard's pot,

Or have some mystic rhyming muttered o'er it,

Ere it will serve the turn.

Berth. (pressing the jewel on her arm.)

O no! right well I feel there is no need.

Ethw. Come, let us go : we do not part thou know'st,
But at the castle gate. Cheer up, my Bertha !
I'll soon return, and oft return again. [EXEUNT.]

SCENE IV.

An apartment in a royal castle. Enter ETHWALD and ALWY, speaking as they enter.

Ethw. What peace ! peace, say'st thou, with these glorious arms,
In conquest red, occasion bright'ning round us,
And smiling victory, with beck'ning hand,
Pointing to future fields of nobler strife,
With richer honours crown'd ? What, on the face
Of such fair prospects draw the veil of peace !
Cold blasting peace ! The blackest fiend of hell
Hath not a thought more dev'lish !

Alwy. It is indeed a flat unpleasant tale
For a young warrior's ear : but well hast thou
Improv'd the little term of bold occasion ;
Short while thou wert but Mollo's younger son,
Now art thou Mairnieth's lord.

Ethw. And what is Mairnieth's lordship ! I will
own
That, to my distant view, such state appear'd
A point of fair and noble eminence ;
But now—what is it now ? O ! it is sunk
Into a petty knoll ! I am as one
Who doth attempt some lofty mountain's height,
And having gained what to the upcast eye
The summit's point appear'd, astonish'd sees

Its cloudy top, majestic and enlarged,
Towering aloft, as distant as before.

Alwy. Patience, brave Ethwald; ere thy locks
are grey,

Thy helmed head shall yet in battle tower,
And fair occasion shape thee fair reward.

Ethw. Ere that my locks are grey! the world
ere now

Hath crouch'd beneath a beardless youth. But
I —

I am as one who mounts to th' azure sky
On the rude billow's back, soon sunk again :
Like the loud thunder of th' upbreking cloud,
The terror of a moment. Fate perverse !
'Till now, war's frowning spirit wont, when
rous'd,

To urge with whirling lash his sable steeds,
Nor slack his furious speed till the wide land
From bound to bound beneath his axle shook :
But soon as in my hand the virgin spear
Had flesh'd its ruddy point, then is he turn'd
Like a tired braggard to his caves of sloth.

(stamping on the ground.)

Peace! cursed peace! Who will again unchain
The grizly dog of war?

Alwy. Mean'st thou the British prince?

Ethw. (eagerly.) What say'st thou, Alwy?

Alwy. I said not aught.

Ethw. Nay, marry! but thou didst!

And it has rais'd a thought within my mind.
The British prince releas'd, would he not prove
A dog of war, whose yell would soon be follow'd?

Alwy. They do indeed full hard advantage
take
Of his captivity, and put upon him
Conditions suited to his hapless state,
More than his princely will.

Ethw. 'Tis basely done: would that some
friendly hand
His prison would unbar and free the thrall!
But no, no, no! I to the king resign'd him;
'Twere an unworthy deed.

Alwy. It were most difficult;
For now they keep him in a closer hold,
And bind his hands with iron.

Ethw. Have they done this? I'm glad on't! O
I'm glad on't!

They promised nought unworthy of a prince
To put upon him — Now my hands are free!
And, were it made of living adamant,
I will unbar his door. Difficult, say'st thou!
No, this hath made it easy.

Alwy. Well softly then; we may devise a way
By which the Seneschal himself will seem
The secret culprit in this act.

Ethw. No, no!
I like it not; tho' I must work i' the dark,
I'll not in cunningly devised light
Put on my neighbour's cloak to work his ruin.
But let's to work apace! the storm shall rise!
My sound shall yet be heard!

Alwy. Fear not, thou shalt ere long be heard
again,
A dark'ning storm which shall not soon be lay'd.

Ethw. Ah, thou hast touch'd where my life's
life is cell'd!

Is there a voice of prophecy within thee?

(catching hold of his arm eagerly.)

I will believe there is! my stirring soul

Leapt at thy words. Such things ere now have
been:

Men oft have spoke, unweeting of themselves;
Yea, the wild winds of night have utter'd
words,

That have unto the list'ning ear of hope
His future greatness told, ere yet his thoughts
On any certain point had fix'd their hold.

Alwy. Thou may'st believe it: I myself, me-
thinks,

Feel secret earnest of thy future fortune;
And please myself to think my friendly hand
May humbly serve, perhaps, to build thy great-
ness.

Ethw. Come to my heart, my friend! tho' new
in friendship,

Thou, and thou only, bear'st true sympathy
With mine aspiring soul. I can with thee
Unbar my mind — Methinks thou shiv'rest,
Alwy.

Alwy. 'Tis very cold.

Ethw. Is it? I feel it not:

But in my chamber burns the crackling oak,
There let us go.

Alwy. If you are so inclin'd.

*(As they are going, Ethw. stops short, and
catches hold of Alwy eagerly.)*

Ethw. A sudden fancy strikes me : Woggar-wolfe,
That restless ruffian, might with little art
Be rous'd on Wessex to commit aggression :
Its royal chief, now leagu'ing with our king,
Will take the field again.

Alwy. We might attempt him instantly : but
move,
In faith I'm cold ! [EXEUNT.]

SCENE V.

A dark apartment in the same castle. WOGGAR-WOLFE is discovered asleep upon a couch of rushes, and covered with a mat. Enter ALWY and a Follower, with a lad bearing a torch before them. ALWY signs with his hand, and the torch-bearer retires to a distance.

Alwy. Softly, ere we proceed ; a sudden thought,
Now crossing o'er my mind, disturbs me much,
He who to-night commands the farther watch,
Canst thou depend upon him ?

Fol. Most perfectly ; and, free of hostile bounds,
The British prince ere this pursues his way.

Alwy. I'm satisfied : now to our present purpose.

(As they advance towards the couch, WOGGAR-WOLFE is heard speaking in his sleep.)

Ha ! speaks he in his sleep ? some dream disturbs
him :

His quiv'ring limbs beneath the cov'ring move.
He speaks again.

Wog. (*in his sleep.*) Swift, in your package
stow those dead men's geer,
And loose their noble coursers from the stall.

Alwy. Ay, plund'ring in his sleep.

Wog. Wipe thou that blade :
Those bloody throats have drench'd it to the
hilt.

Alwy. O, hear the night-thoughts of that bloody
hound !

I must awake him. Ho, brave Woggarwolfe !

Wog. Hear how those women scream ! we'll
still them shortly.

Alwy. Ho, Woggarwolfe !

Wog. Who calls me now ? cannot you master it ?

(*Alwy knocks upon the ground with his stick.*)

What, batt'ring on it still ? Will it not yield ?

Then fire the gate.

Alwy. (*shaking him.*) Ho, Woggarwolfe, I say !

Wog. (*starting up half awake.*) Is not the castle
taken ?

Alwy. Yes, it is taken.

Wog. (*rubbing his eyes.*) Pooh ! it is but a
dream.

Alwy. But dreams full oft are found of real
events

The forms and shadows.

There is in very deed a castle taken,

In which your Wessex foes have left behind

Nor stuff, nor store, nor mark of living thing.

Bind on thy sword and call thy men to arms !

Thy boiling blood will bubble in thy veins,

When thou hast heard it is the tower of Boruth.

Wog. My place of strength ?

Fol. Yes, chief ; I spoke with one new from
the West,

Who saw the ruinous broil.

Wog. By the black fiends of hell ! therein is
stored

The chiefest of my wealth. Upon its walls

The armour of a hundred fallen chiefs

Did rattle to the wind.

Atwy. Now will it sound elsewhere.

Wog. (*in despair.*) My noble steeds, and all
my stalled kine !

O, the fell hounds ! no mark of living thing ?

Fol. No mark of living thing.

Wog. Ah ! and my little arrow-bearing boy !

He whom I spared amidst a slaughter'd heap,

Smiling all weetless of th' uplifted stroke

Hung o'er his harmless head !

Like a tamed cub I rear'd him at my feet :

He could tell biting jests, bold ditties sing,

And quaff his foaming bumper at the board,

With all the mock'ry of a little man.

By heav'n I'll leave alive within their walls,

Nor maid, nor youth, nor infant at the breast,

If they have slain that child ! blood-thirsty
ruffians !

Atwy. Ay, vengeance ! vengeance ! rouse thee
like a man !

Occasion tempts ; the foe, not yet return'd,

Have left their castle careless of defence.

Call all thy followers secretly to arms :

Set out upon the instant.

Wog. By holy saints, I will! reach me, I pray! (*pointing to his arms lying at a little distance from him.*)

Alwy. (*giving them.*) There, be thou speedy.

Wog. (*putting on his armour.*) Curse on those loosen'd springs, they will not catch!

Oh, all the goodly armour I have lost!

Light curses on my head! if I do leave them

Or spear, or shield, or robe, or household stuff,

Or steed within their stalls, or horn or hoof

Upon their grassy hills! (*looking about.*) What want I now?

Mine armour-man hath ta'en away my helm —

Faith, and my target too! hell blast the buzzard!

[EXIT *furiously.*

Alwy. (*laughing.*) Ethwald, we have fulfill'd thy bidding well,

With little cost of craft! But let us follow,

And keep him to the bent.

[EXEUNT.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *A small close grove, with a steep rocky bank at one end of it. Several Peasants are discovered standing upon the bank, as if looking at some distant sight.*

1st Pea. Good lack a day ! how many living souls,
In wide confused eddying motion mix'd,
Like cross set currents on the restless face
Of winter floods !

2d Pea. Where fight the Northern Mercians ?

1st Pea. On the right.
The gentle Ethling, as I am inform'd,
Fights likewise on the right : heav'n spare his head !

'Tis his first battle.

3d Pea. Hear, hear ! still louder swells that horrid sound.

1st Pea. Ay, many voices join in that loud din,
Which soon shall shout no more.

3d Pea. Ay, good neighbour,
Full gloriously now looks that cover'd field,
With all those moving ranks and glitt'ring arms ;
But he who shall return by setting sun
Will see a sorry sight.

(*A loud distant noise.*)

1st Pea. Heav'n save us all! it is the warlike
yell

Of those damn'd Britons that increaseth so.

By all the holy saints our men are worsted!

(an increasing noise heard without.)

Look! yonder look! they turn their backs and fly.

3d Pea. O blasting shame! where fights brave
Ethwald now?

He is, I fear, far in the distant wing.

Let us be gone! we are too near them here:

The flight comes this way: hear that horrid sound!

The saints preserve us!

(The sound of the battle increases, and is heard nearer. The Peasants come hastily down from the bank, and exeunt. Enter EDWARD with several followers disordered and panic-struck.)

1st Fol. *(looking round.)* They cease to follow
us: this thickest grove

Has stopp'd the fell pursuit: here may we rest.

(EDWARD throws himself down at the root of a tree, and covers his face with his hands.)

2d Fol. *(filling his helmet with water from a stream, and presenting it to Edw.)*

My prince, this cooling water will refresh you.

Ed. *(keeping his face still covered with one hand and waving him off with the other.)*

Away, away! and do not speak to me!

(A deep pause, the noise of the battle is again heard coming nearer.)

1st Fol. We must not tarry here. *(to Edw.)*

My Lord, the farther thickets of this wood

Will prove a sure concealment: shall we move?

Edw. (still covering his face.) Let the earth gape
and hide me. *(another deep pause.)*

3d Fol. to 1st. The sin of all this rout falls on
thy head,

Thou cursed Thane! thou and thy hireling knaves
First turn'd your backs and fled.

1st Fol. to 3d. Thou liest, foul tongue! it was
thy kinsman there

Who first did turn; for I was borne away,
(pointing to 4th Fol.)

Unwillingly away, by the rude stream
Of his fear-stricken bands. When, till this hour,
Did ever armed Briton see my back?

4th Fol. Arm'd Britons dost thou call them?
devils they are!

Thou know'st right well they deal with wicked
sprites.

Those horrid yells were not the cries of men;
And fiends of hell look'd thro' their flashing eyes.
I fear to face the power of simple man
As little as thyself.

Enter more Fugitives.

1st Fol. (to Ed.) Up, my good Lord! Hence
let us quickly move;

We must not stay.

Ed. Then thrust me thro' and leave me.
I'll flee no more. *(looking up wildly, then fixing his
eyes wistfully upon 3d Follower, and
bending one knee to the ground.)*

Ebbert, thy sword is keen, thy arm is strong;
O, quickly do't! and I shall be with those
Who feel nor shame nor panic.

(3d Fol. and several others turn their faces away and weep. Enter more Fugitives.)

1st Fol. What, is all lost?

1st Fug. Yes, yes! our wing is beaten.
Seagurth alone, with a few desp'rate men,
Still sets his aged breast against the storm;
But thick the aimed weapons round him fly,
Like huntsmen's arrows round the toiled boar,
And he will soon be nothing.

Edw. (*starting up.*) O, God! O, living God!
my noble father!

He has no son! — Off, ye debasing fears!
I'll tear thee forth, base heart, if thou dost let me.

(*coming forward and stretching out his arms.*)
Companions, noble Mercians — Ah, false word!
I may not call you noble. Yet, perhaps,
One gen'rous spark within your bosom glows.
Sunk in disgrace still lower than ye all,
I may not urge — Who lists will follow me!

All with one voice. We will all follow thee!

Ed. Will ye, in truth? then we'll be brave men
still. (*brandishing his sword as he goes off.*)
My noble father!

[EXEUNT, *clashing their arms eagerly.*

SCENE II.

A confused noise of a battle is heard. The scene draws up and discovers the British and Mercian armies engaged. Near the front of the stage they are seen in close fight, and the ground strew'd with several wounded and dead soldiers, as if they had been fighting for some time. Farther off, missile weapons and showers of arrows darken the air, and the view of the more distant battle is concealed in thick clouds of dust. The Mercians gain ground upon the Britons; and loud cries are raised by them to encourage one another. An active Mercian falls, and their progress is stopped whilst they endeavour to bear him off.

Fallen Mercian. I'm slain, I'm slain! tread o'er me and push forward.

Mer. Chief. O stop not thus! to it again, brave Mercians!

(The Mercians push on, encouraging one another with cries and clashing of arms: one of their bravest soldiers is wounded on the front of the stage and staggers backwards.)

Wounded Mer. Ay, this is death! O that my life had held

To see the end of this most noble game! *(falls down, but seeing the Mercians about to push the Britons off the stage, raises himself half from the ground and claps his hands exultingly.*

Well fought, brave Mercian! On, my noble Mercians!
(*Sinks down again.*)

I am in darkness now! a clod o' the earth! (*dies.*)

Britons. (without.) Fresh succour, Britons! courage! victory!

Carwallen and fresh succour!

(*The Britons now raise a terrible yell, and push back the Mercians, who yield ground and become spiritless and relaxed as their enemy becomes bolder. The Britons at last seize the Mercian standard, and raise another terrible yell, whilst the Mercians give way on every side.*)

1st falling Mer. Horror and death! the hand of wrath is o'er us!

2d falling Mer. A fell and fearful end! a bloody lair!

The trampling foe to tread out brave men's breath.

(*The Britons yell again, and the Mercians are nearly beat off the stage.*)

(*Voice without.*) Ethwald! the valiant Ethwald! succour, Mercians!

(*Voice within.*) Hear ye, brave comrades? Ethwald is at hand.

Enter ETHWALD, with his sword drawn.

Ethw. What, soldiers! yield ye thus, while vict'ry smiles

And bids us on to th' bent? Your northern comrades

Mock at their savage howls, and drive before them

These chafed beasts of prey. Come! to it bravely!

To it, and let their mountain matrons howl,
For these will soon be silent.
Give me the standard.

Voice. They have taken it.

Ethw. Taken! no, by the spirits of the brave!
Standard of ours on Snowdon winds to float!
No! this shall fetch it back! (*taking off his helmet
and throwing it into the midst of the enemy,
then rushing upon them bare-headed and
sword in hand. The Mercians clash their
arms and raise a great shout : the Britons
are driven off the stage ; whilst many of the
dying Mercians clap their hands and raise
a feeble shout after their comrades. The
scene closes.*)

SCENE III.

*An open space before a royal tent ; the curtains
of which are tucked up, and shew a company of
warriors and dames within it. On either side
of the open stage soldiers are drawn up in order.
Enter two petty Thanes on the front of the
stage.*

1st Thane. Here let us stand and see the ceremony.

Without the tent, 'tis said the king will crown
The gallant Ethling with a wreath of honour,
As the chief agent in this victory
O'er stern Carwallen and his Britons gain'd.

2d Thane. Thou sayest well. Within the royal
tent

They wait, as I am told, the Ethling's coming,
Who is full tardy. Softly, they come forth.

* How like a ship, with all her goodly sails
Spread to the sun, the haughty princess moves !

A flourish of trumpets. Enter from the tent the King, with ETHELBERT, EDRICK, Thanes, and Attendants ; and ELBURGA, with DWINA and Ladies. They advance towards the front of the stage.

King. Nay, sweet Elburga, clear thy frowning brow ;

He who is absent will not long delay
His pleasing duty here.

Elb. On such a day, my Lord, the brave I honour,

As those who have your royal arms maintain'd
In war's iron field, such honour meriting.
What individual chiefs, or here or absent,
Are therein lapt, by me unheeded is ;
I deign not to regard it.

King. Thou art offended, daughter, but unwisely.

Plumed with the fairest honours of the field,
Such pious grief for a brave father's death,
Bespeaks a heart such as a gentle maid
In her faith-plighted Lord should joy to find.

Elb. Who best the royal honours of a prince
Maintains, best suits a royal maiden's love.

King. Elburga, thou forget'st that gentleness
Which suits thy gentle kind.

* Probably I have received this idea from Samson Agonistes, where Dalila is compared to a stately ship of Tarsus "with all her bravery on, and tackle trim," &c.

Elb. (with much assumed stateliness.) I hope,
my Lord,
I do meantime that dignity remember,
Which doth beseem the daughter of a king !

King. Fie ! clear thy cloudy brow ! it is my will
Thou honour graciously his modest worth.

(Elb. bows, but smiles disdainfully.)
By a well feigned flight, he was the first
Who broke the stubborn foe, op'ning the road
To victory. Here, with some public mark
Of royal favour, by thy hand received,
I will to honour him ; for, since the battle,
A gloomy melancholy o'er him broods,
E'en far exceeding what a father's death
Should cast upon a youthful victor's triumph.
Ah ; here he comes ! look on that joyless face !

Elb. (aside to Dwina, looking scornfully to Edward as he approaches.)
Look with what slow and piteous gait he comes !
Like younger brother of a petty Thane,
Timing his footsteps to his father's dirge.

Dwina. (aside.) Nay, to my fancy seems it
wond'rous graceful.

Elb. (contemptuously.) A youth, indeed, who
might with humble grace
Beneath thy window tell his piteous tale.

Enter EDWARD, followed by ETHWALD and Attendants.

King. Approach, my son : so will I call thee
now.

Here is a face whose smiles should gild thy honours,

If thou art yet awake to beauty's power.

Edw. (kissing Elburga's hand respectfully.)

Honour'd I am indeed ; most dearly honour'd :
I feel it here, (*his hand on his heart,*) and should
be joyful too,

If aught could gild my gloom.

(Sighs very deeply, then suddenly recollecting himself.)

Elburga, thou wert ever fond of glory,

And ever quick to honour valiant worth :

Ethwald, my friend—hast thou forgotten Ethwald?
(Presenting Ethw. to her.)

Elb. Could I forget the warlike Thane of Mairnieth.

I must have barr'd mine ears against all sound ;
For every voice is powerful in his praise,
And every Mercian tongue repeats his name.

(Smiling graciously upon Ethw.)

King. (impatiently.) Where go we now? we
wander from our purpose.

Edward, thy youthful ardour season'd well
With warlike craft, has crown'd my age with glory:
Here be thy valour crown'd, it is my will,
With honour's wreath, from a fair hand receiv'd.

(Giving the wreath to Elburga.)

Edw. (earnestly.) I do beseech you, uncle!—
pray receive

My grateful thanks! the mournful cypress best
Becomes my brow: this honour must not be.

King. Nay, lay aside unseemly diffidence ;
It must be so.

Edw. (impressively.) My heart is much depress'd :

O do not add

The burden of an undeserved honour,
To bend me to the earth !

King. These warlike chieftains say it is deserv'd,
And nobly earn'd. It is with their concurrence
That now I offer thee this warrior's wreath :
Yes, Ethling, and command thee to receive it.
(*Holding up his hand.*) There, let the trumpet
sound. (*Trumpets sound.*)

Edw. (holding up his hands distractedly.)

Peace, peace ! nor put me to this agony ! (*trumpets
cease.*)

And am I then push'd to this very point ?
Well, then, away deceit ! too long hast thou
Like the incumbent monster of a dream
On the stretch'd sleeper's breast, depress'd my
soul :

I shake thee off, foul mate ! O royal sire,
And you, ye valiant Mercians, hear the truth !
Ye have believ'd, that by a feigned flight,
I gained the first advantage o'er the foe,
And broke their battle's strength : O would I had !
That flight, alas ! was real ; the sudden impulse
Of a weak mind, unprov'd and strongly struck
With new and horrid things, until that hour
Unknown and unimagin'd. —

Nor was it honour's voice that call'd me back :
The call of nature saved me. Noble Seagurth !

Had I been son of any sire but thee,
I had in dark and endless shame been lost,
Nor e'er again before these valiant men
Stood in this royal presence.

In all my fortune, blest I am alone
That my brave father, rescued by these arms,
Look'd on me, smiling thro' the shades of death,
And knew his son. He was a noble man!
He never turn'd from danger—but his son—

(Many voices at once.) His son is worthy of him!
(Repeated again with more voices.) His son is
worthy of him!

Ethelbert. (with enthusiasm.) His son is worthy
of the noblest sire that ever wielded sword!
(Voices.) Crown him, fair princess! Crown
the noble Edward!

*(Elburga offers him the wreath, which he
puts aside vehemently.)*

Edw. Forbear! a band of scorpions round my
brow

Would not torment me like this laurel wreath.

*(Elb. turns from him contemptuously, and
gives the wreath to the King.)*

Edw. (to King.) What, good, my Lord! is
there not present here

A Mercian brow deserving of that wreath?

Shall he, who did with an uncover'd head

Your battle fight, still wear his brows unbound?

Do us not this disgrace!

King. (fretfully.) Thou dost forget the royal
dignity:

Take it away.

(Giving it to an officer.)

(*A confused murmuring amongst the soldiers.*)
(*Aside to the Seneschal, alarmed.*) What noise is that?

Sen. (*aside to King.*) Your troops, my sire, are much dissatisfied,
For that their favourite chief by you is deem'd
Unworthy of the wreath.

King. (*aside.*) What, is it so? call back mine officer. (*taking the wreath again, and giving it to Elb.*)

This wreath was meant for one of royal line,
But every noble Mercian, great in arms,
Is equal to a prince.
Crown the most valiant Ethwald.

Elb. (*crowning Ethw. with great assumed majesty.*)

Long may thy laurels flourish on thy brow,
Most noble chief!

(*Ethw. takes the wreath and presses it to his lips, bowing to Elb. then to the King.*)

Ethw. They who beneath the royal banner fight,
Unto the fortunes of their royal chief
Their success owe. Honour'd, indeed, am I
That the brave Ethling hath so favour'd me,
And that I may, most humbly at your feet,
My royal sire, this martial garland lay.

(*He, kneeling, lays the wreath at the King's feet; the King raises him up and embraces him; the Soldiers clash their arms and call out.*)

Sold. Long live the king! and long live noble
Ethwald!

(*This is several times repeated.* EXEUNT King, Edward, Elburga, &c. &c. Elburga looking graciously to Ethwald as she goes off. Manent Ethwald and Ethelbert.)

Eth. (*repeating indignantly as they go off.*)
Long live the King, and long live noble Ethwald!
Fie on the stupid clowns, that did not join
The gen'rous Edward's name! (*to Ethw. who is standing looking earnestly after the princess.*)
What dost thou gaze on?

Ethw. The princess look'd behind her as she went.

Eth. And what is that to thee?

(*Walks silently across the stage once or twice, gloomy and dissatisfied, then turning short upon Ethw.*)

When wert thou last to see the lovely Bertha?

Ethw. (*hesitating.*) I cannot reckon it unto the day—

Some moons ago.

Eth. Some moons! The moon in her wide course shines not

Upon a maid more lovely.

Ethw. I know it well.

Eth. Thou dost.

Ethw. (*after a pause, looking attentively to Eth. who stands muttering to himself.*)

Methinks thou holdest converse with thyself.

Eth. (*speaking aloud, as if he continued to talk to himself.*)

She steps upon the flowery bosom'd earth,

As tho' it were a foot-cloth, fitly spread
Beneath the tread of her majestic toe ;
And looks upon the human countenance,
Whereon her Maker hath the signs impress'd
Of all that he within the soul hath stored
Of great and noble, gen'rous and benign,
As on a molten plate, made to reflect
Her grandeur and perfections.

Ethw. Of whom speak'st thou ?

Eth. Not of the gentle Bertha. [EXIT.

Ethw. What may he mean ? He mark'd, with
much displeasure,

The soldiers shout my name, and now my favour
With Mercia's princess frets him. What of this ?
Ha ! hath his active mind outrun mine own
In shaping future consequences ? Yes,
It must be so ; a cloudy curtain draws,
And to mine eye a goodly prospect shews,
Extending — No, I must not look upon it.

[EXIT *hastily*.

SCENE IV.

An open space with arms, garments, and other spoils of the Britons heaped up on every side of the stage. Enter Soldiers, and range themselves in order, then enter ETHELBERT and a Soldier, talking as they enter.

Eth. Ethwald amongst his soldiers, dost thou say,
Divides his spoil ?

Sol. He does, most bountifully ;
Nor to himself more than a soldier's share
Retains, he is so gen'rous and so noble.

Eth. I thank thee, friend. (*Soldier retires.*)

(*Eth. after a pause.*)

I like not this : behind those heaps I'll stand,
And mark the manner of this distribution. (*retires.*)

Enter ALWY and a petty Thane.

Alwy. Brave warriors ! ye are come at his
desire,

Who for each humble soldier, bold in arms,
That has beneath his orders fought, still bears
A brother's heart. You see these goodly spoils :
He gives them not unto the cloister'd priests :
His soldiers pray for him. (*Soldiers shout.*)

Thane. (*to ALWY.*) What is thy meaning ?

Alwy. Knowest thou not the king has now
bestow'd

The chiefest portion of his British spoil
On Alban's abbey ?

Enter ETHWALD.

(*Soldiers shouting very loud.*) Long live brave
Ethwald ! health to noble Ethwald !

Ethw. Thanks for these kindly greetings, va-
liant hearts !

(*Soldiers shout again very loud.*)

In truth I stand before you, brave companions,
Somewhat asham'd ; for with my wishes match'd,
These hands are poor and empty. (*Loud acclam-
ations.*)

I thank you all again ; for well I see
You have respect unto the dear good will
That must enrich these heaps of homely stuff.

Soldiers. Long live our gen'rous leader !

And thou, good Baldwin, too? Yet fie upon it!
 The heaviest weapon of the British host
 Lacks weight of metal for thy sinewy arm.——
 Ha! health to thee, mine old and honest host!
 I'm glad to see thee with thine arm unbound.
 And ruddy too! thy dame should give me
 thanks:

I send thee home to her a younger man
 Than I receiv'd thee. (*to the Soldier with the lots
 who is passing him.*)

Nay, stay thee, friend, I pray, nor pass me o'er.
 We all must share alike: hold out thy cap.
 (*Smiling as he draws.*)

The knave would leave me out.

(*Loud acclamations, the Soldiers surrounding
 him and clashing their arms.*)

Enter SELRED and Followers.

Sel. (*to Sol.*) Ha! whence comes all this uproar?

Sol. Know you not?

Your noble brother 'midst his soldiers shares
 His British spoils.

Sel. The grateful knaves! is all their joy for this?
 (*To his Followers.*)

Well, go and add to it my portion also;

'Twill make them roar the louder. Do it quickly.
 [EXIT.

Soldiers. (*looking after Sel.*) Heaven bless him
 too, plain, honest, careless soul!

He gives as tho' he gave not. (*Loud acclamations.*)
 Long live brave Ethwald, and the noble Selred!

Ethw. (aside to Alwy, displeased.) How came he here?

Alwy. I cannot tell.

Ethw. (to Sol.) We are confined within this narrow space:

Go range yourselves at large on yon green sward,
And there we'll spread the lots.

(*EXEUNT the Soldiers, arranging themselves as they go.*)

SCENE V.

An apartment in a royal castle. Enter ETHELBERT, and leans his back upon a pillar near the front of the stage, as if deeply engaged in gloomy thoughts : afterwards enters ETHWALD by the opposite side, at the bottom of the stage, and approaches Eth. slowly, observing him attentively as he advances.

Ethw. Thou art disturbed, Ethelbert.

Eth. I am.

Ethw. Thine eyes roll strangely, as tho' thou beheld'st

Some dreadful thing : —

On what look'st thou?

Eth. Upon my country's ruin.

The land is full of blood: her savage birds
O'er human carcasses do scream and batten :
The silent hamlet smokes not ; in the field
The aged grandsire turns the joyless soil :
Dark spirits are abroad, and gentle worth
Within the narrow house of death is laid,
An early tenant.

Ethw. Thou'rt beside thyself!
Think'st thou that I, with these good arms, will
stand

And suffer all this wreck?

Eth. Ha! say'st thou so? Alas, it is thyself
Who rul'st the tempest! (*Shaking his head
solemnly.*)

Ethw. If that I bear the spirit of a man,
Thou falsely see'st! Think'st thou I am a beast;
A fanged wolf, reft of all kindly sense,
That I should do such deeds?
I am a man aspiring to be great,
But loathing cruelty: who wears a sword
That will protect and not destroy the feeble.

(*Putting his hand vehemently upon his sword.*)

Eth. Ha! art thou roused! blessings on thy
wrath!
I'll trust thee still. But see, the Ethling comes,
And on his face he wears a smile of joy.

Enter EDWARD, advancing gaily to ETHWALD.

Ed. A boon, a boon, great Mairnieth's Thane
I crave.

Eth. You come not with a suppliant's face, my
Lord.

Ed. Not much cast down for lack of confidence
My suit to gain. That envious braggard there,
The chief of Bournoth, says, no Mercian arm,
Of man now living, can his grandsire's sword
In warlike combat wield: and, in good sooth!
I forfeit forty of my fattest kine
If Ethwald's arm does not the feat achieve.

(*To Ethw.*) What say'st thou, friend? Methinks
thou'rt grave and silent :

Hast thou so soon thy noble trade forgot ?

Have at it then ! I'll rouse thy spirit up :

I'll soldier thee again. (*Drawing his sword play-
fully upon Ethwald, who defends himself in
like manner.*)

Fie on't ! that was a wicked northern push :

It smells of thine old sports in Mollo's walls.

(*Pauses and fights again.*)

To it again ! How listless thou art grown !

Where is thy manhood gone ?

Ethw. Fear not, my Lord, enough remains
behind

To win your forty kine.

Ed. I'll take thy word for't now : in faith,
I'm tired !

I've been too eager in the morning's chace

To fight your noonday battles. (*Putting the point
of his sword to the ground, and leaning famili-
arly upon Ethwald.*)

My arm, I fear, would make but little gain

With Bournoth's sword. By arms and brave
men's love !

I could not brook to see that wordy braggard

Perching his paltry Sire above thy pitch :

It rais'd my fiend within. When I am great,

I'll build a tower upon the very spot

Where thou did'st first the British army stay,

And shame the grandsires of those mighty Thanes

Six ages deep. Lean I too hard upon thee ?

Ethw. No, nothing hard : most pleasant and most kindly.

Take your full rest, my Lord.

Ed. In truth, I do : methinks it does me good To rest upon thy brave and valiant breast.

Eth. (*stepping before them with great animation.*)
Well said, most noble Edward !
The bosom of the brave is that on which
Rests many a head : but most of all, I trow,
Th' exposed head of princely youth thereon,
Rests gracefully. (*Steps back some paces, and looks at them with delight.*)

Ed. You look upon us, Thane, with eager eyes
And looks of meaning.

Eth. Pardon me, I pray !
My fancy oftentimes will wildly play,
And strong conceits possess me.
Indulge my passing freak : I am a man
Upon whose grizzled head the work of time
Hath been by care perform'd, and, with the
young,
Claiming the priv'lege of a man in years.

(*Taking the hands of Ed. and Ethw. and joining them together.*)

This is a lovely sight ! indulge my fancy :
And on this sword, it is a brave man's sword,
Swear that you will, unto each other prove,
As prince and subject, true.

Ed. No, no, good Thane !
As friends, true friends ! that doth the whole
include.

I kiss the honour'd blade. (*Kissing the sword held out by Eth.*)

Eth. (*presenting the sword to Ethw.*) And what says noble Ethwald ?

Ethw. All that the brave should say (*kissing it also.*)

Eth. (*triumphantly.*) Now, Mercia, thou art strong ! give me your hands ;

Faith, I must lay them both upon my breast !

(*Pressing both their hands to his breast.*)

This is a lovely sight !

Ethw. (*softened.*) You weep, good Ethelbert.

Eth. (*brushing off his tears with his hand.*)

Yes, yes ! such tears as doth the warm shower'd earth

Shew to the kindly sun.

Ed. (*to Ethw. gently clapping his shoulder.*)

I love this well : thou like a woman weep'st,

And fightest like a man. But look, I pray !

There comes my arm's-man with the braggard's sword :

Let us assay it yonder.

[EXEUNT.]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *An apartment in a royal castle. ETHWALD is discovered sitting in deep meditation by the side of a couch, with a lamp burning by him on a high stand: the rest of the stage entirely dark.*

Ethw. Why am I haunted with these thoughts?

What boots it

That from their weak and priest-beridden king
The soldiers turn distasteful, and on me
In mutter'd wishes call? What boots all this?
Occasion fairly smiles, but I am shackled;
Elsewhere I needs must turn my climbing
thoughts,

But where? The youthful see around them spread
A boundless field of undetermin'd things,
Towering in tempting greatness:
But, to the closer scan of men matured,
These fade away, and in the actual state
Of times and circumstances each perceives
A path which doth to his advancement lead,
And only one; as to the dazzled eye
Of the night rev'ller, o'er his emptied bowl,
The multiplied and many whirling lights
Do shrink at last into one single torch,
Shedding a steady ray. I see my path;
But what is that to me? my steps are chain'd.

Amongst the mighty great, the earth's high lords,
 There is no place for me ! I must lie down
 In the dark tomb with those, whose passing
 brightness

Shines for a while, but leaves no ray behind.

*(Throws himself half upon the couch, and
 groans heavily.)*

Enter Boy.

Boy. My Lord, my Lord ! *(Ethw. lifts up his
 head, and looks sternly at him.)*

Are you unwell, my Lord ?

Ethw. What dost thou want ?

Boy. I could not sleep : and as I list'ning lay
 To the drear wind that whistles thro' these
 towers,

Methought I heard you groan like one in pain.

Ethw. Away, and go to sleep : I want thee not :
 I say, begone. *(sternly.)* [EXIT BOY.]

(He pauses a while, then sighs very deeply.)

He hangs upon me like a dead man's grasp
 On the wreck'd swimmer's neck — his boyish love
 Was not my seeking ; it was fasten'd on me,
 And now it hath become an iron band
 To fetter down my powers. O that I were
 Amidst the warlike and ungente cast
 To strive uncumber'd ! What have I to do
 With soft affection ? *(soften'd.)* Yet it needs must
 be !

His gen'rous love : — his brave ungrudging love :
 His manly gentle love — O that he had
 Mine equal friend been born, who in my rise
 Had fair advancement found, and by my side
 The next in honour stood !

He drags me to the earth ! I needs must lay
 My head i' the dust.—Dull hopeless privacy !
 From it my soul recoils : unto my nature
 It is the death of death, horrid and hateful.
(Starting up eagerly.) No, in the tossed bark,
 Commander of a rude tumultuous crew,
 On the wild ocean would I rather live ;
 Or in the mined caverns of the earth
 Untamed bands of lawless men controul,
 By crime and dire necessity enleagued :
 Yea, in the dread turmoil of midnight storms,
 If such there be, lead on the sable hosts
 Of restless sprites, than say to mortal man
 “Thou art my master.”

Enter Boy.

What here again ?

Boy. O pardon me, my Lord ! I am in fear ;
 Strange sounds do howl and hurtle round my
 bed ;

I cannot rest.

Ethw. Be gone, thou wakeful pest ! I say, be-
 gone ! [EXIT Boy.]

*(Ethw. walks several times across the stage
 and then pauses.)*

Yet in my mind one ever-present thought
 Rises omnipotent o'er all the rest,
 And says, “Thou shalt be great.”
 What may this mean ? before me is no way.
 What deep endued seer will draw this veil
 Of dark futurity ? Of such I've heard,
 But when the troubled seek for them, they are
 not.

Re-enter Boy.

(Stamping with his foot.) What! here a third time?

Boy. (falling at his feet.) O, my noble master!
If you should slay me I must come to you;
For in my chamber fearful things there be,
That sound i' the dark; O, do not chide me back.

Ethw. Strange sound within thy chamber,
foolish wight!

Boy. (starting.) Good mercy, list!

Ethw. It is some night-bird screaming on the
tower.

Boy. Ay, so belike it seemeth, but I know—

Ethw. What dost thou know?

Boy. It is no bird, my Lord.

Ethw. What would'st thou say?

Boy. (clasping his hands together, and staring earnestly in Ethw.'s face.)

At dead of night, from the dark Druid's cave
Up rise unhallow'd sprites, and o'er the earth
Hold for the term their wicked rule. Aloft,
Some mounted on the heavy sailing cloud,
Oft pour down noisome streams or biting hail
On the benighted hind, and from his home,
With'wayward eddying blasts, still beat him back.
Some on the waters shriek like drowning men,
And, when the pitying passenger springs forth,
To lend his aid, the dark flood swallows him.
Some on lone marshes shine like moving lights;
And some on towers and castle turrets perch'd,
Do scream like nightly birds, to scare the good,
Or rouse the murd'rer to his bloody work.

Ethw. The Druid's cave, say'st thou? What cave is that?

Where is it? Who hath seen it? What scar'd fool Hath fill'd thine ears with all these horrid things?

Boy. It is a cavern vast and terrible,
Under the ground full deep; perhaps, my Lord,
Beneath our very feet, here as we stand;
For few do know the spot and centre of it,
Tho' many mouths it has and entries dark.
Some are like hollow pits bor'd thro' the earth,
O'er which the list'ning herdsman bends his ear,
And hears afar their lakes of molten fire
Swelt'ring and boiling like a mighty pot.
Some like straight passes thro' the rifted rocks,
From which oft issue shrieks, and whistling gusts,
And wailings dismal. Nay, some, as they say,
Deep hollow'd underneath the river's bed,
Which shew their narrow op'nings thro' the fern
And tangling briars, like dank and noisome holes
Wherein foul adders breed. But not far hence
The chiefest mouth of all, 'midst beetling rocks
And groves of blasted oaks, gapes terrible.

Ethw. So near? but who are they who dwell within?

Boy. The female high arch Druid therein holds,*

With many Druids tending on her will,

* It is natural to suppose that the Diviners or Fortune-tellers of this period should, in their superstitions and pretensions, very much resemble the ancient Druidesses who were so much revered amongst the Britons as oracles and prophetesses, and that they should, amongst the vulgar, still retain the name of

(Old, as they say, some hundred years or more)
Her court, where horrid spells bind to her rule
Spirits of earth and air.

Ethw. Ay, so they tell thee,
But who is he that has held converse with her?

Boy. Crannock, the bloody prince, did visit her,
And she did shew to him the bloody end
Whereto he soon should come ; for all she knows
That is or has been or shall come to pass.

Ethw. Yes, in times past such intercourse
might be,

But who has seen them now ?

Boy. Thane Ethelbert.

Ethw. (*starting.*) What said'st thou, Ethelbert?

Boy. Yes, truly ; oft he goes to visit them
What time the moon rides in her middle course.

Ethw. Art thou assured of this ?

Boy. A youth who saw him issue from the
cave ;

'Twas him who told it me.

Ethw. Mysterious man !

(*After a pause.*) Where sleeps the Thane ?

Boy. If walls and doors may hold him,
He sleeps not distant, in the Southern Tower.

Ethw. Take thou that lamp, and go before
me then.

their great predecessors. In Henry's History of Britain, vol. i. p. 181, it will be found that the superstitious practices of the Druids continued long after their religion was abolished, and resisted for a long time the light of christianity ; and that even so late as the reign of Canute, it was necessary to make laws against it.

Boy. Where?

Ethw. To the Southern Tower. Art thou afraid?

Boy. No, my good Lord, but keep you close behind.

[*EXEUNT, Boy bearing the lamp, and looking often behind to see that Ethw. is near him.*]

SCENE II.

A small gallery or passage with a door in front, which is opened, and enter ETHWALD, and ETHELBERT with a lamp in his hand.

Eth. Then, by the morrow's midnight moon,
we meet

At the Arch Sister's cave : till then, farewell !

Ethw. Farewel ! I will be punctual. [*EXIT.*]

Eth. (*looking after him for some time before he speaks.*)

It ever is the mark'd propensity

Of restless and aspiring minds to look

Into the stretch of dark futurity.

But be it so : it now may turn to good.

[*EXIT, returning back again into the same chamber from which he came.*]

SCENE III.

A wide arched cave, rude but grand, seen by a sombre light ; a small furnace burning near the front of the stage. Enter ETHWALD and ETHELBERT, who pause and look round for some time without speaking.

Ethw. Gloomy, and void, and silent !

Eth. Hush !

Ethw. What hearest thou ?

Eth. Their hollow sounding steps. Lo ! see'st thou not ?

(Pointing to the further end of the stage, where, from an obscure recess, enter three Mystics robed in white, and ranged on one side of the stage, point to Ethwald: whilst from another obscure recess enter three Mystic Sisters, and ranged on the opposite side point to Eth. then from a mid recess enters the Arch Sister robed also in white, but more majestic than the others, and a train of Mystics and Mystic Sisters behind her. She advances half-way up the stage, then stops short, and points also to Ethwald.)

(All the Mystics, &c. speaking at once.)

Who art thou ?

Arch Sist. I know thee who thou art ; the hand of Mercia :

The hand that lifts itself above the head.

I know thee who thou art.

Ethw. Then haply ye do know my errand too.

Arch Sist. I do ; but turn thee back upon thy steps,

And tempt thy fate no farther.

Ethw. From the chaf'd shore turn back the swelling tide !

I came to know my fate, and I will know it.

1st Mystic. Must we call up from the deep centre's womb

The spirits of the night and their dread Lord ?

1st Myst. S. Must we do that which makes the entombed dead

From coffins start ?

Ethw. Raise the whole host of darkness an ye will,

But I must be obey'd.

(The Arch Sister shrieks, and, throwing her mantle over her face, turns to go away.)

Ethw. If there is power in mortal arm to hold you,

Ye stir not hence until I am obey'd.

1st Myst. And how compell'st thou ?

Ethw. With this good sword.

1st Myst. Swords here are children's wands of no avail :

There, warrior, is thy weapon.

Ethw. Where, Mystic ? say.

1st Mystic. *(pointing to the furnace.)* Behold within that fire

A bar of burning iron ! pluck it forth.

Ethw. *(resolutely.)* I will.

(Goes to the furnace, and putting in his hand, pulls out what seems a red hot bar of iron.)

Arch Sist. (throwing off her mantle.)

Thou hast subdued me ; thou shalt be obey'd.

Ethw. (casting away the bar.)

Away, thou paltry terror!

Arch Sist. (to *Ethw.*) We now begin our rites :
be firm, be silent.

(*She stretches forth her hand with a commanding air, and the Mystics and Mystic Sisters begin their incantations at the bottom of the stage, moving round in several mazy circles one within another. Fire is at last seen flashing from the midst of the inner circle, and immediately they all begin a hollow muttering sound, which becomes louder and louder, till at length it is accompanied with dismal sounds from without, and distant music, solemn and wild.*)

Ethw. (grasping *Ethelbert's* hand.) What dismal sounds are these ?

'Tis like a wild responsive harmony,

Tun'd to the answ'ring yells of damned souls.

What follows this ? Some horrid thing ! Thou smilest :

Nay, press thy hand, I pray thee, on my breast ;
There wilt thou find no fear.

Eth. Hush ! hear that distant noise.

Ethw. 'Tis thunder in the bowels of the earth,
Heard from afar.

(*A subterraneous noise like thunder is heard at a distance, becoming louder as it approaches. Upon hearing this, the Mystics*

suddenly leave off their rites : the music ceases, and they, opening their circles, range themselves on either side of the stage, leaving the Arch Sister alone in the middle.)

Arch Sist. (holding up her hand.) Mystics and Mystic Maids, and leagued bands !

The master spirit comes : prepare.

(All repeat after her.) Prepare.

1st Mystic. Hark ! thro' the darken'd realms below,

Thro' the fiery regions glow ;

Thro' the massy mountain's core,

Thro' the mines of living ore ;

Thro' the yawning caverns wide,

Thro' the solid and the void ;

Thro' the dank and thro' the dry,

Thro' th' unseen of mortal eye ;

Upon the earthquake's secret course, afar

I hear the sounding of thy car :

Sulphureous vapours load the rising gale ;

We know thy coming ; mighty master, hail !

(They all repeat.) Mighty master, hail !

(The stage darkens by degrees, and a thick vapour begins to ascend at the bottom of the stage.)

2d Mystic. Hark, hark ! what murmurs fill the dome !

Who are they who with thee come ?

Those who, in their upward flight,

Rouse the tempests of the night :

Those who ride in flood and fire ;

Those who rock the tumbling spire :
Those who, on the bloody plain,
Shriek with the voices of the slain :
Those who thro' the darkness glare,
And the sleepless murd'rer scare :
Those who take their surly rest
On the troubled dreamer's breast :
Those who make their nightly den
In the guilty haunts of men.
Thro' the heavy air I hear
Their hollow trooping onward bear :
The torches' shrinking flame is dim and pale ;
I know thy coming ; mighty master, hail !

(All repeat again.) Mighty master, hail !

(The stage becomes still darker, and a thicker vapour ascends.)

3d Mystic. Lo ! the mystic volumes rise !
Wherein are lapt from mortal eyes
Horrid deeds as yet unthought,
Bloody battles yet unfought :
The sudden fall and deadly wound
Of the tyrant yet uncrown'd ;
And his line of many dyes
Who yet within the cradle lies.
Moving forms, whose stilly bed
Long hath been among the dead ;
Moving forms, whose living morn
Breaks with the nations yet unborn,
In mystic vision walk the horrid pale :
We own thy presence ; mighty master, hail !
(All.) Mighty master, hail !

Enter from the farther end of the stage crowds of terrible spectres, dimly seen through the vapour, which now spreads itself over the whole stage. All the Mystics and Mystic Sisters bow themselves very low, and the Arch Sister, standing alone in the middle, bows to all the different sides of the cave.

Ethw. (to 1st Mystic.) To every side the mystic mistress bows,

What meaneth this? mine eye no form perceives:
Where is your mighty chief?

1st Mystic. Above, around you, and beneath.

Ethw. Has he no form to vision sensible?

1st Mystic. In the night's noon, in the winter's noon,
in the lustre's noon :

Of times twice ten within the century's round
Is he before our leagued bands confess'd
In dread appearance :

But in what form or in what circumstance
May not be told ; he dies who utters it.

(Ethw. shrinks at this, and seems somewhat appalled. The Arch Sister, after tossing about her arms, and writhing her body in a violent agitation, fixes her eyes, like one waked from a dream, stedfastly upon Ethw.; then going suddenly up to him, grasps him by the hand with energy.)

Arch Sist. Thou who would'st pierce the deep
and awful shade

Of dark futurity, to know the state
Of after greatness waiting on thy will,

For in thy power acceptance or rejection
Is freely put, lift up thine eyes and say,
What see'st thou yonder ?

*(Pointing to a dark arched opening in the
roof of the cave, where an illuminated
crown and sceptre appears.)*

Ethw. (starting.) Ha! e'en the inward vision
of my soul
In actual form pourtray'd! *(his eyes bright'ning
wonderfully.)*

Say'st thou it shall be mine ?

Arch Sist. As thou shalt chuse.

Ethw. I ask of thee no more.

*(Stands gazing upon the appearance till it
fades away.)*

So soon extinguish'd? Hath this too a meaning?
It says perhaps, my greatness shall be short.

Arch Sist. I speak to thee no further than I
may,

Therefore be satisfied.

Ethw. And I am satisfied. Dread mystic
maid,

Receive my thanks.

Arch Sist. Nay, Ethwald, our commission ends
not here,

Stay and behold what follows.

*(The stage becomes suddenly dark, and most
terrible shrieks, and groans, and dismal
lamentations, are heard from the farther
end of the cave.)*

Ethw. What horrid sounds are these ?

Arch Sist. The varied voice of woe, of Mercia's woe :

Of those who shall, beneath thine iron hand,
The cup of mis'ry drink. There, dost thou hear
The dungeon'd captives' sighs, the shrilly shrieks
Of childless mothers and distracted maids,
Mix'd with the heavy groans of dying men?
The widow's wailings, too, and infant's cries —
(*Ethw. stops his ears in horror.*)

Ay, stop thine ears; it is a horrid sound.

Ethw. Forefend that e'er again I hear the like!
What didst thou say? O, thou didst foully say!
Do I not know my nature? heav'n and earth
As soon shall change——

(*A voice above.*) Swear not!

(*A voice beneath.*) Swear not!

(*A voice on the same level, but distant.*) Swear
not!

Arch Sist. Now, once again, and our commis-
sion ends.

Look yonder, and behold that shadowy form.

(*Pointing to an arched recess, across which
bursts a strong light, and discovers a crown-
ed phantom, covered with wounds, and re-
presenting by its gestures one in agony.*

Ethw. looks, and shrinks back.)

What dost thou see?

Ethw. A miserable man : his breast is pierced
With many wounds, and yet his gestures seem
The agony of a distracted mind
More than of pain.

Arch. Sist. But wears he not a crown?

Ethw. Why does it look so fix'dly on me thus?
What are its woes to me?

Arch Sist. They are thy own.
Know'st thou no traces of that alter'd form,
Nor see'st that crowned phantom is thyself?

Ethw. (*shudders, then, after a pause,*)
I may be doom'd to meet a tyrant's end,
But not to be a tyrant.
Did all the powers of hell attest the doom,
I would belie it. Know I not my nature?
By every dreaded power and hallow'd thing ——

(*Voice over the stage.*) Swear not!

(*Voice under the stage.*) Swear not!

(*Distant voice off the stage.*) Swear not!

(*Thundering noise is heard under ground.*

The stage becomes instantly quite dark, and

Mystics and Spirits, &c. disappear, Ethw.

and Eth. remaining alone.)

Eth. (*after a pause.*) How art thou?

Ethw. Is it thy voice? O, let me feel thy grasp!
Mine ears ring strangely, and my head doth feel
As tho' I were bereaved off my wits.

Are they all gone? Where is thy hand, I pray?
We've had a fearful bout!

Eth. Thy touch is cold as death: let us ascend
And breathe the upper air. * [EXEUNT.

* I will not take upon me to say that, if I had never read Shakspeare's *Macbeth*, I should have thought of bringing Ethwald into a cavern under ground to enquire his destiny, though I believe this desire to look into futurity (particularly in a superstitious age) is a very constant attendant on ambition; but I hope the reader will not find of the above scene any offensive use made of the works of that great master.

SCENE IV.

A forest. Enter ETHWALD with a bow in his hand, and a Boy carrying his arrows.

Ethw. (looking off the stage.) Ha! Alwy, soon
return'd! and with him comes
My faithful Ongar.

Enter ALWY and ONGAR with bows also, as if in quest of sport, by the opposite side.

Thou comest, Alwy, with a busy face. (*To Boy.*)
Go, Boy; I shot mine arrow o'er those elms,
Thou'lt find it far beyond. [EXIT Boy.
Now, friend, what tidings?

Alwy. Within the tufted centre of the wood
The friendly chiefs are met, thus, like ourselves
As careless rambles guised, all to a man
Fix'd in your cause. Their followers too are firm;
For, much disgusted with the monkish face
Their feeble monarch wears, a warlike leader,
Far, far inferior to the noble Ethwald,
May move them as he lists.

Ethw. That time and circumstances on me call
Imperiously, I am well assured.
Good Ongar, what say'st thou? how thrives thy
part
Of this important task?

Ong. Well as your heart could wish. At the
next council,
Held in the royal chamber, my good kinsman
Commands the guard, and will not bar our way.

Ethw. May I depend on this ?

Ong. You may, my Lord.

Ethw. Thanks to thee, Ongar ! this is noble service,

And shall benobly thank'd. There is, good Alwy,
Another point ; hast thou unto the chiefs
Yet touch'd upon it ?

Alwy. Yes, and they all agree 'tis most expedient

That with Elburga's hand, since weaker minds
Are blindly wedded to the royal line,
Your right be strengthen'd.

Ethw. And this they deem expedient ?

Alwy. You sigh, my lord ; she is, indeed, less gentle ——

Ethw. Regard it not, it is a passing thought,
And it will have its sigh, and pass away.

(Turning away for a little space, and then coming forward again.)

What means hast thou devised, that for a term
Selred and Ethelbert may be remov'd ?
For faithful to the royal line they are,
And will not swerve : their presence here were dang'rous :

We must employ them in some distant strife.

Alwy. I have devis'd a plan, but for the means
Brave Ongar here stands pledged. Woggarwolfe,
Who once before unweetingly has served us,
Will do the same again.

Ethw. How so ? 'tis said that since his last
affray,
With the keen torment of his wounds subdu'd,

On sick bed laid by the transforming pow'rs
Of artful monks, he has become most saintly.

Alwy. Well, but we trust his saintship ne'er-
theless

May still be lur'd to do a sinner's work.
To burn the castle of a hateful heretic
Will make amends for all his bloody deeds :
You catch the plan : nay, Hexulf and his priest
Will be our help-mates here. Smile not ; good
Ongar

Has pledged his word for this.

Ethw. And I will trust to it. This will, indeed,
Draw off the Thanes in haste. But who is near ?
Sculking behind yon thicket stands a man :
See'st thou ? (*Pointing off the stage.*)

Alwy. Go to him, Ongar, scan him well,
And if his face betrays a list'ner's guilt —
Thou hast thy dagger there ?

Ong. Yes, trust me well.

Ethw. Nay, Ongar, be not rash in shedding blood !
Let not one drop be spilt that may be spar'd.
Secure him if he wear a list'ner's face :
We are too strong for stern and ruthless caution.
[EXIT Ongar.]

I'm glad he is withdrawn a little space,
Ere we proceed to join the leagued chiefs.
Hast thou agreed with Cuthbert ? Is he sure ?

Alwy. Sure. 'Tis agreed when next the Ethling
hunts,

To lead him in the feigned quest of game
From his attendants ; there, in ambush laid,
Cuthbert and his adherents seize upon him,

And will conduct him with the ev'ning's close
To Arrick's rugged tower. All is prepar'd.

Ethw. But hast thou charged him well that
this be done

With all becoming care and gentleness,
That nothing may his noble nature gall
More than the hard necessity compels?

Alwy. Do not mistrust us so! your brow is dark :
At Edward's name your changing countenance
Is ever clouded. (*Ethw. turns from him agitated.*)
You are disturb'd, my Lord.

Ethw. I am disturb'd. (*Turning round and
grasping Alwy by the hand.*)
I'll tell thee, Alwy — yes I am disturb'd —
No gleam of glory thro' my prospect breaks,
But still his image, 'thwart the brightness cast,
Shades it to night.

Alwy. It will be always so : but wherefore
should it ?
Glory is ever bought by those who earn it
With loss of many lives most dear and precious.
So is it destin'd. Let that be unto him
Which in the crowded breach or busy field
All meet regardless from a foeman's hand.
Doth the still chamber, and the muffled tread,
And th' unseen stroke that doth th' infliction deal,
Alter its nature ?

Ethw. (*Pushing Alwy away from him vehe-
mentely, and putting up both his hands to
his head.*)
Forbear! forbear ! I shut mine eyes, mine ears ;
All entrance bar that may into my mind

Th' abhorred thing convey. Have I not said,
 Thou shalt not dare in word, in look, in gesture,
 In slightest indication of a thought,
 Hold with my mind such base communication?
 By my sword's strength! did I not surely think
 From this bold seizure of the sovereign power,
 A pow'r for which I must full dearly pay,
 So says the destiny that o'er me hangs,
 To shield his weakness and restore again
 In room of Mercia's crown a nobler sway,
 Won by my sword, I would as lief——Nor-
 thumberland
 Invites my arms, and soon will be subdu'd;
 Of this full sure, a good amends may be
 To noble Edward made.

*Alwy. (who during the last part of Ethw.'s
 speech has been smiling behind his back ma-
 lignantly.)*

O yes, full surely:
 And wand'ring harpers shall in hall and bower
 Sing of the marv'llous deed.

*Ethw. (turning short upon him, and perceiving
 his smile.)*

Thou smilest methinks.

Full well I read the meaning of that look:
 'Tis a fiend's smile, and it will prove a false one.

*(Turning away angrily, whilst Alwy walks to
 the bottom of the stage.)*

(Aside, looking suspiciously after him.) Have I
 offended him? he is an agent

Most needful to me. *(Aloud, advancing to him.)*
 Good Alwy, anxious minds will often chide——

(*Aside, stopping short.*) He hears me not, or is it but a feint ?

Alwy. (*looking off the stage.*) Your arrow-boy returns.

Ethw. (*aside, nodding to himself.*) No, 'tis a free and unoffended voice ;

I'm wrong. This is a bird whose fleshed beak
The prey too strongly scents to fly away :

I'll spare my courtesies. (*Aloud.*) What say'st thou, Alwy ?

Alwy. (*pointing.*) Your arrow-boy.

Ethw. I'm glad he is return'd.

Re-enter Boy.

Boy. No where, my Lord, can I the arrow find.

Ethw. Well, boy, it matters not ; let us move on. [EXEUNT.

SCENE V.

A narrow gallery in an abbey or cloister, with several doors opening into it. Enter HEXULF and ONGAR and two Monks.

Hex. Fearnot, brave Ongar, we, upon thy hint,
Will quickly act ; for here our eager wishes
Are with the Church's good most closely join'd.

First Monk. This is the time when he should
walk abroad.

(*Listening.*) I hear him at his door.

Hex. Leave us, good Ongar.

Ong. To your good skill I do commit it then ;
Having but only you, most rev'rend father,
To take my part against this wizard Thane.

First Monk. (*still listening.*) Begone, he issues forth.

[EXIT Ongar.

(*One of the doors opens slowly, and enters WOGGARWOLFE, wrapped in a cloak, and his head bound.*

Hex. Good-morrow, valiant Thane, whose pious gifts

Have won heav'n's grace to renovate thy strength,
And grant thee longer life, how goes thy health?

Wog. I thank you, rev'rend father, greatly mended.

First Monk. The prayers of holy men have power to save,

E'en on the very borders of the tomb,

The humbled soul who doth with gifts enrich

The holy church.

Second Monk. Didst thou not feel within thee
A peaceful calm, a cheering confidence,
Soon as thy pious offering was accepted?

Wog. (*hesitating.*) Yes, rev'rend fathers, — I have thought indeed —

Perhaps you meant it so—that since that time
The devil has not scar'd me in my dreams
So oft as he was wont, when sore with wounds
I first was laid upon my bed of pain.

Hex. Ay, that is much; but noble Woggarwolfe,

Thinkest thou not the church doth merit well
Some stable gift, some fix'd inheritance?

Thou hast those lands that are so nearly join'd
Unto St. Alban's abbey.

Wog. (*much surprised.*) My lands! give up
my lands?

First Monk. What are thy lands
Compar'd to that which they will purchase for
thee?

Sec. Monk. To lay thy coffin'd body in the
ground,
Rob'd in the garb of holy men, and bless'd?

First Monk. To have thy tomb beneath the
shading arch
Of sacred roof, where nought profane may enter;
Whilst midnight spirits stand and yell without,
But o'er the sacred threshold dare not trespass.

Wog. (*with a rueful countenance.*)
What, do you think I shall be dead so soon?

Hex. Life is uncertain; but how glorious, Thane,
To look beyond this wicked world of strife,
And for thyself a lofty seat provide
With saints and holy men, and angel bands!

Wog. Nay, father, I am not so highly bent;
Do but secure me from the horrid fangs
Of the terrific fiend: I am not proud;
That will suffice me.

Hex. Nay, herein thy humility we praise not,
And much I fear, at such a humble pitch,
He who so lately scar'd thee in thy dreams
May reach thee still.

First Monk. O think of this!

Hex. Dreadful it is, thou know'st,
To see him in thy dreams; but when awake,
Naked, and all uncloth'd of flesh and blood,
As thou at last must be; how wilt thou bear

To see him yelling o'er thee as his prey?
Bearing aloft his dark and hideous form;
Grinding his horrid jaws and darting on thee
His eyes of vivid fire? (*The Monks sign themselves
with great marks of fear, and Woggar-
wolfe looks terrified.*)

Ah! think'st thou, Thane,
That many gifts, ay, half of all thou'rt worth,
Would dearly purchase safety from such ter-
rours?

Wog. (in a quick perturbed voice.)

I have the plunder of two neighb'ring chiefs,
Whom I surprised within their towers and slew;
I'll give you all — if that suffices not,
I'll fall upon a third, ay, tho' it were
My next of kin, nor spare of all his goods
One fragment for myself. O holy fathers!
I humbly crave saintly protection of you.

Hex. Nay, Woggarwolfe, on shrines of holy
saints

No gift ere works with efficacious power
By force and violence gain'd; unless, indeed,
It be the spoil of some unsaintly Thane,
Some faithless wizard or foul heretic.
Thou hast a neighbour, impious Ethelbert;
His towers to burn and consecrate his spoils,
O'er all thy sins would cast a sacred robe,
On which nor fiend nor devil durst fix a fang.
But now thou lackest strength for such a work,
And may'st be dead ere thou hast time to do it:
Therefore I counsel thee, give up thy lands.

Wog. O, no! I'm strong enough: my men are strong.

Give us your rev'rend blessing o'er our heads
And we'll set out forthwith.

Hex. Then nothing doubt that on your worthy zeal

Will fall the blessing. Let us onward move.

Where are thy followers? (*EXEUNT Hex. talking busily to Wog. and the Monks smiling to one another as they go out.*)

SCENE VI.

The royal apartment: the King is discovered with HEXULF, the Seneschal, and several Friends or Counsellors, seated round a council table.

King. (*as if continuing to speak.*)

It may be so: youth finds no obstacle,
But I am old.

Full many a storm on this grey head has beat;
And now, on my high station do I stand,
Like the tired watchman in his air-rock'd tower,
Who looketh for the hour of his release.

I'm sick of worldly broils, and fain would rest
With those who war no more. One gleam of light
Did sweetly cheer the ev'ning of my day:
Edward, my son! he was the kindest prop
That age did ever rest on — he is gone,
What should I fight for now?

Sen. For thine own honour; for the weal of
Mercia,
With weapons in our hands, and strong in men,

Who to the royal standard soon will flock,
If summon'd by thy firm and gen'ral orders.
Shall these men be our masters? Heaven fore-
fend!

Five thousand warriors might disperse the foe,
Even with that devil Ethwald at their head;
And shall we think of granting to those rebels
Their insolent demands?

King. Good Seneschal, if that you think our
strength

Permits us still in open field to strive
With hope of good, I am not yet so old
But I can brace these stiffen'd limbs in iron,
And do a soldier's service. (*To 2d Coun.*) Thane
of Mordath,

Thy visage light'neth not upon these hopes;
What are thy thoughts?

Sec. Coun. E'en that these hopes will bring us
to a state

Reft of all hope.

The rebel chiefs but seek their own enrichment,
Not Ethwald's exaltation, good my Lord;
Bribe them, and treat for peace. Lack you the
means;

The church, for whose enriching you have rais'd
This storm, can well supply it; and most surely
Will do it cheerfully. (*Turning to Hexulf.*)

Hex. No, by the holy mass! that were to bring
The curse of heav'n upon our impious heads.
To spoil the holy church is sacrilege:
And to advise such spoil in anywise
Is sacrilegious and abominable.

First Coun. I am as faithful to the holy church
As thou art, angry priest. I do defy thee —

Sen. What, have ye no respect unto the king?
I do command you, peace. Who now intrudes?

Enter a Servant in great terrour.

Serv. The rebel force! the castle is surprised!
They are at hand — they have o'erpower'd the
guard.

Sec. Coun. Pray God thou liest! I think it
cannot be. (*They all rise up alarmed.*)

Serv. It is as true as I do tread this spot.

Enter a Soldier wounded.

King. (*to Sol.*) Ha! what say'st thou? thou
bearest for thy words
A rueful witness.

Sol. Take arms, and save the king, if it be
possible.

The rebel chieftains have the gates surprised,
And gain'd, below, the entrance of this tower.
They struggled for the pass; sharp was the broil;
This speaks for me, that I have borne my part.
(*Falls down exhausted.*)

Hex. (*to King.*) Retire, my Lord, into the
higher chamber.

Your arm can give but small assistance here.
Until this horrid visit be o'erpast,
You may conceal yourself.

King. No, father, never shall the king of Mercia
Be, from his hiding-place, like a mean man
Pull'd forth. But, noble friends, it seems not wise
That this necessity should reach to you.
These rebels seek my life, and with that life

They will be satisfied. In my defence,
Thus taken as we are, all stand were useless ;
Therefore, if now you will obey your king,
His last command, retire and save your lives
For some more useful end. Finding me here,
They will no farther search : retire, my friends.

Sec. Coun. What, leave our king to face his
foes alone !

King. No, not alone ; my friend, the Senes-
chal,

Will stay with me. We have been young together,
And the same storms in our rough day of life
Have beat upon us : be it now God's will,
We will lay down our aged heads together
In the still rest, and bid good night to strife.
Have I said well, my friend ?

(Holding out his hand to the Seneschal.)

*Sen. (kissing his hand with great warmth, and
putting one knee to the ground.)*

O my lov'd master ! many a bounteous favour
Has shower'd upon me from your royal hand,
But ne'er before was I so proudly honour'd.

(Rising up with assumed grace.)

Retire, young men, for now I must be proud ;
Retire, your master will confront the foe
As may become a king.

(All calling out at once.) No, no ! we will
not leave him.

*(They all range themselves, drawing their
swords, round the King, and the old
Seneschal stands, by pre-eminence, close
to his master's side.)*

Sec. Coun. Here is a wall thro' which they first
must force
A bloody way, ere on his royal head
One silver hair be scath'd.

Enter ETHWALD, ALWY, and the Conspirators.

Alwy. Now vengeance for injustice and oppression !

Sec. Coun. On your own heads, then, be it,
miscreant chiefs !

(They fight round the King, his party defend him bravely, till many more Conspirators enter, and it is overpowered.)

Ethw. (aside, angrily, to Alwy, on still seeing the King standing in the midst, unhurt, and, with great dignity, the Seneschal by his side, and no one offering to attack him.)

Hast thou forgot ? Where are thy chosen men ?
Is there no hand to do the needful work ?

This is but children's play. *(To some of his party.)*
Come, let us search, that in the neighb'ring
chamber

No lurking foe escape. [*Exit with some Followers.*

Alwy. (giving a sign to his Followers, and going up insolently to the King.)

Oswal, resign thy sword.

Sen. First take thou mine, thou base, ignoble traitor.

(Giving Alwy a blow with his sword ; upon which Alwy and his Followers fall upon the King and the Seneschal, and surrounding them on every side, kill them, with many wounds, the crowd gathering so close round them, that their fall cannot be seen.)

Re-enter ETHWALD, and the crowd opening on each side shews the dead bodies of the King and the Seneschal.

Ethw. (*affecting surprise.*) What sight is this?
Ah! ye have gone too far. Who did this deed?

Alwy. My followers, much enraged at slight offence,
Did fall upon him.

Ethw. All have their end decreed, and this,
alas!
Has been his fated hour.

Come, chiefs and valiant friends, why stand we
here

Looking on that which cannot be repair'd?
All honour shall be paid unto the dead.
And, were this deed of any single hand
The willing crime, he should have vengeance too.
But let us now our nightly task fulfil;
Much have we still to do ere morning dawn.

[*EXEUNT Ethw. and Followers, and the scene closes.*]

SCENE VII.

A royal Apartment: Enter ELBURGA, with her hair scattered upon her shoulders, and with the action of one in violent grief, followed by DWINA, who seems to be soothing her.

Elb. Cease, cease! thy foolish kindness soothes
me not:

My morning is o'ercast; my glory sunk;
Leave me alone to wring my hands and weep.

Dwi. O, no, my princely mistress ! grieve not thus !

Over our heads the blackest clouds do pass
And brighter follow them.

Elb. No, no ! my sky is night ! I was a princess
Almost a queen : in gorgeous pomp beheld,
The public gaze was ever turn'd on me ;
Proud was the highest Thane or haughtiest dame
To do my bidding, ev'ry count'nance watch'd
Each changeful glance of my commanding eye
To read its meaning : now my state is changed :
Scoffing and insult and degrading pity
Abide the daughter of a murder'd king.
Heaven's vengeance light upon them all ! Begone !
I hate the very light for looking on me !
Begone ! and soothe me not !

Dwi. Forgive me, princess ; do not thus
despair ;
King Oswal's daughter many friends will find.

Elb. Friends ! hold thy peace ! — Oh it doth
rend my heart !

I have been wont to talk of subjects, vassals,
Dependants, servants, slaves, but not of friends.
Where shall I hide my head ?

Dwi. Surely, dear mistress, with Saint Cuthbert's nuns,
Whose convent by your father's gifts is rich,
You will protection find. There quiet rest,
And holy converse of those pious maids,
After a while will pour into your mind
Soft consolation. (*Putting her hand on Elburga's
soothingly.*)

Elb. (pushing her away.)

Out upon thee, fool ! Go, speak thy comforts
To spirits tame and abject as thyself :
They make me mad ; they make me thus to
tear

My scatter'd locks and strew them to the winds.
(Tearing her hair distractedly.)

Enter a Servant.

What brings thee here ? *(to Ser.)*

Ser. Ethwald, the king is at the gate, and asks
To be admitted to your presence, princess.

Elb. (becoming suddenly calm.)

What, Ethwald, say'st thou ! say'st thou truly so ?

Ser. Yes, truly, princess.

Elb. Ethwald, that Thane whom thou dost call
the king ?

Ser. Yes, he whom all the states and chiefs of
Mercia

Do call the king.

Elb. He enters not. Tell him I am unwell,
And will not be disturb'd. [EXIT Ser.]

What seeks he here ? Fie, poorly fainting soul !
Rouse ! rouse thee up ! To all the world beside
Subdued and humbled would I rather be
Than in the eyes of this proud man.

Re-enter Servant.

What say'st thou ?

Is he departed ?

Ser. No, he will not depart, but bids me say
The entrance he has begg'd he now commands.
I hear his steps behind me.

Enter ETHWALD.

(*Elburga turns away from him proudly.*)

Ethw. Elburga, turn and look upon a friend.

Elb. (*turning round haughtily, and looking on him with an assumed expression of anger and scornful contempt.*)

Usurping rebel, who hast slain thy master ;
Take thou a look that well beseems thy worth,
And hie the hence, false traitor !

Ethw. Yes, I will hie me hence, and with me
lead

A fair and beauteous subject to my will ;
That will which may not be gainsaid. For now
High heaven, that hath decreed thy father's fall,
Hath also me appointed king of Mercia,
With right as fair as his ; which I'll maintain,
And by the proudest in this lordly realm
Will be obey'd, even by thy lofty self.

Elb. Put shackles on my limbs, and o'er my
head

Let your barr'd dungeons low'r ; then may'st thou
say,

“ Walk not abroad,” and so it needs must be :
But think'st thou to subdue, bold as thou art,
The lofty spirit of king Oswal's daughter ?
Go, bind the wild winds in thy hollow shield,
And bid them rage no more : they will obey thee.

Ethw. Yes, proud Elburga, I will shackle thee.
But on the throne of Mercia shalt thou sit,
Not in the dungeon's gloom.
Ay, and, albeit the wild winds do refuse
To be subjected to my royal will,

The lofty spirit of king Oswal's daughter
I will subdue. (*Taking her hand.*)

Elb. (*throwing him off from her vehemently.*)
Off with those bloody hands that slew my father!
Thy touch is horrid to me! 'tis a fiend's grasp:
Out from my presence! bloody Thane of Mair-
neath!

Ethw. Ay, frown on me, Elburga; proudly
frown:

I knew thy haughty spirit, and I lov'd it,
Even when I saw thee first in gorgeous state;
When, bearing high thy stately form, thou stoodst
Like a proud queen, and on the gazing crowd,
Somewhat offended with a late neglect,
Darted thy looks of anger and disdain.
High Thanes and Dames shrunk from thine eye,
whilst I,

Like one who from the mountain's summit sees,
Beneath him far the harmless lightning play,
With smiling admiration mark'd thee well,
And own'd a kindred soul. Each angry flash
Of thy dark eye was loveliness to me.
But know, proud maid, my spirit outmasters
thine,

And heedeth not the anger nor the power
Of living thing.

Elb. Bold and amazing man!

Ethw. And bold should be the man who weds
Elburga.

Elb. Away! it cannot be, it shall not be!
My soul doth rise against thee, bloody chief,
And bids thy power defiance.

Ethw. Then art thou mine in truth, for never
yet
Did hostile thing confront me unsubdued ;
Defy me and thou'rt conquer'd.

Elb. Thou most audacious chief! it shall not be.

Ethw. It shall, it must be, maiden, I have
sworn it ;

And here repeat it on that beauteous hand
Which to no power but with my life I'll yield.

(Grasping her hand firmly, which she struggles to free.)

Frown not, Elburga ! 'tis in vain to strive ;
My spirit outmasters thine.

Elb. Say'st thou to me thou did'st not slay my
father ?

Say'st thou those hands are guiltless of his death ?

Ethw. Think'st thou I'll plead, and say I have
not slain

A weak old man, whose inoffensive mind,
And strong desire to quit the warring world
For quiet religious rest, could be, in truth,
No hindrance to my greatness ? were this fitting
In Mercia's king, and proud Elburga's lord ?

Elb. (turning away.)

Elburga's lord ! Thou art presumptuous, prince :
Go hence, and brave me not.

Ethw. I will go hence forthwith ; and, by my
side,

The fair selected partner of my throne,
I'll lead where the assembled chiefs of Mercia
Wait to receive from me their future queen.

Elb. Distract me not !

Ethw. Resistance is distraction.

Who ever yet my fixed purpose cross'd?
Did Ethwald ever yield? Come, queen of Mercia!
This firm grasp shall conduct thee to a throne:
 (*Taking her hand, which she feebly resists.*)
Come forth, the frowning, haughty bride of
 Ethwald.

Elb. Wonderful man!
If hell or fortune fight for thee I know not,
Nothing withstands thy power.

[*EXEUNT Ethw. leading off Elb. in triumph,
and Dwina following, with her hands and
eyes raised to heaven in astonishment.*)]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I. *An arched passage from a gateway in the royal castle. The sound of warlike music without. Enter ETHELBERT and SELRED with their Followers, as if just come from a long march : enter, by the opposite side, ALWY, upon which they halt, the foremost of the Followers but just appearing under the gateway.*

Alwy. Welcome, most valiant chieftains! Fame reports

That crown'd with full success ye are return'd.

Eth. Good sooth we boast but little of our arms!
Tho' Woggarwolfe, our base ignoble spoiler,
Wounded and sorely shent, we've left behind,
Again in cloister'd walls with ghostly men,
Winding his soul, with many a heavy groan,
Into a saintly frame! God speed the work!
We are but just in time to save our halls.

Sel. It is a shame that such a ruffian thief
Should thus employ the arms of warlike Thanes.

Alwy. In truth it is, but now there reigns in
Mercia

A warlike king, who better knows to deal
With valiant men. The messenger inform'd you?

Sel. He did; yet, be it own'd, to call him
king

Sounds strangely in our ears. How died king
Oswal?

Eth. (to *Sel.*) Patience, my friend! good time
will shew thee all.

Yet pray inform us, *Alwy*, ere we part,
Where is young Edward? In these late commo-
tions

What part had he?

Alwy. Would to the holy saints I could inform
you!

Reports there are, incongruous and absurd—
Some say, in hunting from his followers stray'd,
Passing at dusk of eve a high-swoln stream,
Therein he perish'd; others do maintain
That, loathing greatness, he conceals himself
In some lone cave: but, as I bear a heart
True to king Ethwald and the public weal,
I know of him no more.

Sel. Thou liest!

Eth. (pulling back *Selred.*) Peace, art thou mad?

Alwy. (pretending not to hear.) What said brave
Selred?

Eth. A hasty exclamation of no meaning.

Alwy. I must away, and bear the welcome
tidings

Of your arrival to the royal ear.

Eth. But stop, before thou go'st I fain would
know

How far'd *Elburga* in the passing storm?

Where has she refuge found?

Alwy. Within these walls ; she is the queen of Mercia.

Eth. I am indebted to thee. [EXIT *Alwy.*

Sel. (*staring with surprise upon Ethelbert.*)

What dost thou think of this? Did we hear truly?
To the usurper of her father's crown,
And if our fears be true, his murd'rer too!
To him! O most unnatural!

Eth. Ay, so it is. As one who ventures forth
After an earthquake's awful visitation,
The country round in strange unwonted guise
Beholds ; here swelling heights and herby knolls,
Where smok'd the cottage and the white flocks
browz'd,

Sunk into turbid pools ; there rifted rocks,
With all their shaggy woods upon their sides,
In the low bosom of the flowery vale
Resting uncouthly — even so does he,
Who looks abroad after the storms of state,
Strange changes see ; unnatural and strange.

Sel. It makes my spirit boil — the gentle
Edward!

So gently brave!

Eth. Yes, there is cause of grief
And indignation too : but Ethwald reigns,
Howe'er he gain'd his height, and he possesses
The qualities that suit his lofty station.
With them I fear he has his passions also,
Hostile to public good : be it our part
To use the influence we still retain
O'er his ambitious mind for Mercia's weal!
This is our duty now.

Sel. I'll take thy counsel. (*To the Soldiers.*)
Follow, weary comrades.

[*EXEUNT Eth. and Sel. and their Followers,*
marching across the stage.

SCENE II.

A royal Apartment. ELBURGA, as Queen, discovered sitting on a chair of state, with DWINA, Ladies, and Officers of State attending.

Elb. We've waited long: how goes the day?
know'st thou? (*To First Officer.*)

First Off. As comes the light across this arched
roof

From those high windows, it should wear, methinks,
Upon noon-day.

Elb. And the procession to the royal chapel
Should at this hour begin. The king, perchance,
Is with affairs detain'd: go thou and see.

[*EXIT First Officer.*

I am impatient now. (*Voice heard without.*)
What voice is that?

First SONG without.

*Hark! the cock crows, and the wind blows,
Away, my love, away!*

*Quick, d'on thy weeds and tell thy beads,
For soon it will be day.*

First Lad. 'Tis sadly wild.

Dwin. 'Tis sad, but wond'rous sweet.
Who may it be? List, list! she sings again.

Second SONG without.

*Where lay'st thou thy careless head?
 On the cold heath is my bed.
 Where the moor-cock shuts his wing,
 And the broken snake weaves his ring.
 Safe and fearless will I be,
 The coiled adder stings not me.*

Elb. (*rising, displeased, from her seat.*)
 Call those who wait without. What may this
 mean?

Enter an Attendant.

Whose voice is that which in a day of joy
 Such plaintive music makes?

Atten. Pardon, my royal dame! be not offended!
 'Tis a poor maid bereaved of her mind.
 Rent are her robes, her scatter'd locks unbound,
 Like one who long thro' rugged ways hath stray'd,
 Beat with the surly blast; but never yet,
 Tho' all so sorely shent, did I behold
 A fairer maid. She aims at no despite:
 She's wild, but gentle.

Dwi. O hark again!

Third SONG without.

* *Once upon my cheek
 He said the roses grew,
 But now they're wash'd away
 With the cold ev'ning dew.*

* For this third Song, which is the only literary assistance
 either in verse or prose that I have ever received, I am in-
 debted to the pen of a friend.

*For I wander thro' the night,
 When all but me take rest,
 And the moon's soft beams fall piteously
 Upon my troubled breast.*

(A pause.)

Fourth SONG.

*Ah, maiden! bear the biting smart,
 Nor thus thy loss deplore;
 The Thané's daughter has his heart,
 He will return no more.*

First Lad. 'Tis strangely melancholy.

Dwi. 'Tis like the mournful sounds which oftentimes

The midnight watcher, in his lonely tower,
 Hears with the wailing blast most sweetly mingled,

Elb. (to Attendant.) Go thou and lead her hither.

Atten. I will, great queen. — But here she comes unbidden.

Enter BERTHA, with a wild unsettled air, and her hair scattered upon her shoulders. The Ladies gather about her with curiosity.

First Lad. How fair she is!

Sec. Lad. Her eyes of lovely blue,
 Gentle, but restless. Dost thou see that glance?

(To Sec. Lad.)

I fear to look upon her.

Dwi. Fie, fie, upon it! press not near her thus;
 She seems offended: I will speak to her.

(To Berth.) Sweet Lady, art thou sad?

(*Bertha looks steadfastly at her, then drops her head upon her breast, and makes no answer.*)

We would be kind to thee.

(*Berth. then looks more gently on her, but is still silent.*)

First Lad. Dost thou not speak, thou who canst sing so well?

Dwi. Who taught thee those sweet notes?

Berth. The night was dark : I met spirits on my way :

They sung me sweet songs but they were sorrowful.

Dwi. Ah, woe is me! and dost thou wander, then,

In the dark night alone, no one to tend thee?

Berth. When the moon's dark, I follow the night-bird's cry,

And it doth guide my way. — But he'll return,
So do they tell me, when sweet violets blow,
And summer comes again.

Dwi. And who is he?

Berth. List, and the winds will tell thee as they pass :

The stilly air will whisper it. But softly,
Tell it to none again. They must not know
How stern he is, for he was gentle once.

Dwi. A cruel heart had he who could forsake thee!

Ber. (*putting her hand eagerly on Dwina's mouth.*)
Hush, hush! we'll not offend him. He is great,
And must not be offended.

Elb. (*coming near her.*) What, say'st thou he is great?

Rent are thy weeds, and thin thy ruffled robe :
Why didst thou leave thy home thus unprotected?

Berth. (*turning hastily upon her.*)

I saw his banner streaming in the air,
And I did follow it.

Elb. His banner in the air! What is thy love?

Berth. (*looking fiercely at her.*)

They say he is a king.

Elb. (*smiling.*) Poor maid! 'tis ever thus with
such as she ;

They still believe themselves of some high state,
And mimick greatness.

Berth. Thou art a fair dame and a gay—but
go ;

Take off thine eyes from me ; I love thee not.

(*Shrinks from Elburga, walking backwards,
and looking frowningly at her ; then beckon-
ing to Dwina, she speaks in her ear.*)

They say a royal dame has won his faith,
Stately and proud. But in a gloomy dream
I heard it first, confused and terrible :
And oft-times, since, the fiend of night repeats it,
As on my pressed breast he sits and groans.
I'll not believe it.

Dwi. What is thy name, sweet Lady?

Berth. (*rubbing her hand across her forehead as
if trying to recollect.*)

I had a name that kind friends call'd me by ;
And with a blessing did the holy man
Bestow it on me. But I've wander'd far

Thro' wood and wilds, and strangely on my head
The 'numbing winds have beat, and I have lost it.
Be not offended with me —

For, Lady, thou art gentle and I fear thee.

(*Bowing submissively to Dwina.*)

Enter ETHELBERT.

Eth. (*to Dwina, after looking at Bertha.*)
What maid is that so haggard and so wild?

Dwi. A wand'ring maniac, but so fair and
gentle

Thou needs must speak to her.

Eth. (*going up to Berth.*) Fair Lady, wilt thou
suffer — gracious heaven!

What see I here! the sweet and gentle Bertha!

Ah, has it come to this! alas, alas!

Sweet maiden dost thou know me?

Berth. (*after looking earnestly at him.*)

I know thee well enough. They call thee mad;
Thy wild and raving words oft made the ears
Of holy men to tingle.

Eth. She somewhat glances at the truth. Alas!
I've seen her gay and blooming as the rose,
And cheerful, too, as song of early lark.

I've seen her prattle on her nurse's lap,
Innocent bud! and now I see her thus. (*Weeps.*)

Berth. Ah! dost thou weep? are they unkind
to thee? (*Shaking her head.*)

Yes, yes! from out the herd, like a mark'd deer,
They drive the poor distraught. The storms of
heaven

Beat on him: gaping hinds stare at his woe;
And no one stops to bid heav'n speed his way.

Eth. (*flourish of trumpets.*) Sweet maid, retire.

Berth. Nay, nay! I will not go: there be
without

Those who will frown upon me.

Eth. (*endeavouring to lead her off.*)

I pray thee be entreated!

(*Dwina takes hold of her also to lead her off,
but she breaks from them furiously.*)

Berth. Ye shall not force me! Wist ye who I am?
The whirlwind in its strength contends with me,
And I o'ermaster it.

Eth. Stand round her, then, I pray you, gentle
ladies!

The king must not behold her.

(*The Ladies gather round Bertha, and con-
ceal her.*)

*Enter ETHWALD, followed by Thanes and At-
tendants.*

Ethw. (*after returning the obeisance of the as-
sembly.*)

This gay and fair attendance on our person
And on our queen, most honour'd lords and
dames,

We much regard; and could my heart express—
(*Bertha, hearing his voice, shrieks out.*)

What cry is that?

Dwi. Regard it not: it is a wand'ring maid,
Distracted in her mind, who is in search,
As she conceits it, of some faithless lover.
She sings sweet songs of wildest harmony,
And at the queen's command we led her in.

Ethw. Seeking her love! distracted in her mind!
Have any of my followers wrong'd her? Speak!
If so it be, by righteous heaven I swear!
The man, whoe'er he be, shall dearly rue it.

(Bertha shrieks again, and, breaking through the crowd, runs up to Ethwald. He starts back, and covers his eyes with one hand, whilst she, catching hold of the other, presses it to her breast.)

Berth. I've found thee now, and let the black
fiend growl,
I will not part with thee. I've follow'd thee
Thro' crag and moor and wild. I've heard thy
voice
Sound from the dark hill's side, and follow'd
thee.

I've seen thee on the gath'ring twilight clouds,
Ride with the stately spirits of the storm.
But thou look'dst sternly on me.
O be not angry! I will kneel to thee;
For thou art glorious now, as I am told,
And must have worship. *(kneeling, and bowing her head meekly to the ground.)*

Ethw. (turning away.) O God! O God! Where
art thou, Ethelbert?
Thou might'st have saved me this.

(Looking round, and seeing that Ethelbert weeps, he also becomes softened, and turns to Bertha with great emotion.)

Berth. They say she's fair and glorious: woe
is me!
I am but form'd as simple maidens are.

But scorn me not ; I have a powerful spell,
A Druid gave it me, which on mine arm
When once enclasp'd, will make me fair as she ;
So thou wilt turn to me.

Ethw. O Ethelbert ! I pray thee pity me !
This sight doth move me, e'en to agony.
Remove her hence ; but O deal gently with her !
(*Ethelbert endeavours again to lead her off,
and the Ladies crowd about her. She is
then carried out, and is heard to scream as
they are carrying her.*)

Ethw. (*in great disorder.*) Come, come away !
we do but linger here.

(*Elburga, who, since Ethwald's entering, has
remained in the back ground, but agitated
with passions, now advances angrily to
him.*)

Elb. So thou hast known this maid ?

Ethw. Fie ! speak not to me now.

Elb. Away, away !

Thou hast lodged softer passions in thy breast
Than I have reckon'd on.

Ethw. (*shaking her off.*) Fie ! turn thy face
aside, and shade thine eyes !

That no soft passion in thy bosom lives,
Is thy opprobrium, woman, and thy shame.

Elb. There are within my breast such thoughts,
I trust,
As suit my lofty state.

Ethw. (*aside to Elb.*) Go, heartless pageant, go
Lead on thy senseless shew, and move me not
To do thee some despite.

(*Aloud to the Ladies.*) Move on, fair dames.

(*To Elb. who seems unwilling to go.*)

The king commands it.

[*EXEUNT Elburga and Ladies.*

First Offi. (*to Ethw. who stands with his eyes fixed on the ground.*)

Please you, my Lord, but if you move not also,
The ceremony will, in sooth, appear
As marr'd and cut in twain.

Ethw. What say'st thou, marshal?

First Offi. Please you, my Lord, to move?

Ethw. Ay, thou say'st well: in the soul's agony
A meaner man might turn aside and weep.

[*EXEUNT Ethw. with part of his train, the others ranging themselves in order to follow him. A great confusion and noise is then heard without, and a voice calling out "The king is wounded." The crowd press back again in disorder, and presently re-enter ETHW. supported.*

First Offi. My Lord, how is it with you?

Ethw. I fear but ill, my friend. Where is the
man

That gave me this fell stroke?

First Offi. I cannot tell: they have surrounded
him.

Enter Second Officer.

Sec. Offi. He is secured.

Ethw. Is it a Mercian hand?

Sec. Offi. It is, my Lord, but of no high degree.
It is the frantic stroke of a poor groom,

Who did his late Lord love; and, for that crime,
Last night, with wife and children weeping round
him,

Was by your soldiers turn'd into the cold,
Houseless and bare.

Ethw. Curse on their ruffian zeal!
Torment him not, but let him die in peace.
Would I might say —. I'm very faint, my friends:
Support me hence, I pray you!

[*EXEUNT Ethw. supported.*]

SCENE III.

A royal apartment: an open door in front, shewing an inner chamber, in which is discovered ETHWALD lying upon a couch, and surrounded with the Thanes and Officers of his court, SELRED and ETHELBERT standing on each side of him.

Sel. (after Ethw. has said something to him in a low voice.)

He is too much inclosed and longs for air:
He'll breathe more freely in the outer chamber,
Let us remove him.

(They lift him in his couch, and bring him forward to the front of the stage.)

First Offi. How are you now, my Lord?

Ethw. Somewhat exhausted; and albeit, good
Thanes,

I greatly am indebted to your love,
For a short space I fain would be alone.

First Offi. Farewell ! God send your highness
rest ! meantime

We'll pray for your recovery.

Sec Offi. And heaven will hear our prayers.

Omnes. Amen, amen !

Ethw. Pray heaven to order all things for the
weal

Of my good realm, and I shall be well pleased
To live or die. Adieu ! [EXEUNT *all but Ethw.*

*Selred, and Ethelbert. (After a pause, in
which Ethw. seems agitated and uneasy.)*

My dearest Selred, think it not unkind,

But go thou too. [EXIT *Selred.*

*(Raising himself on the couch, and taking both
the hands of Ethelbert, which he presses in
his, looking up in his face expressively for
some time before he speaks.)*

I am oppress'd. To them, even in this state,
I still must be a king : to you, my friend,
Let me put off all seeming and constraint,
And be a poor weak man. (*A pause.*) Thou speak-
est not,

Thy face is sad and solemn. Well I see
Thou look'st upon me as a dying wretch —
There is no hope.

Eth. Much will it profit thee
To be prepared as tho' there were no hope ;
For if thou liv'st thou'lt live a better man,
And if thou diest, may heaven accept it of thee !

Ethw. O that it would ! But, my good Ethel-
bert,
To be thus seized in my high career,

With all my views of glory op'ning round me —
The Western state ev'n now invites mine arms.
And half Northumberland, in little time,
Had been to Mercia join'd.

Eth. Nay, think not now, I pray thee, of these matters !

They mix uncouthly with the pious thoughts
That do become your state.

Ethw. I know it well ;
But they do press so closely on my heart ——
O I did think to be remembered long !
Like those grand visitations of the earth,
That on its alter'd face for ages leave
The traces of their might. Alas, alas !
I am a powerful, but a passing storm,
That soon shall be forgotten !

Eth. I do beseech thee think of better things !

Ethw. Thou see'st I weep. — Before thee I may
weep. (*Dropping his head upon his breast,
and groaning deeply.*)

Long have I toil'd and stain'd my hands in blood
To gain pre-eminence ; and now, alas !
Newly arrived at this towering height,
With all my schemes of glory rip'ning round
me,

I close mine eyes in darkness, and am nothing.

Eth. What, nothing say'st thou ?

Ethw. O no, Ethelbert !

I look beyond this world, and look with dread
Where all for me is fearful and unknown.
Death I have daily braved in fields of fight,

And, when a boy, oft on the air-hung bough
I've fearless trode, beneath me roaring far
The deep swoln floods with every erring step
Instant destruction. Had I perish'd then —
Would that I had, since it is come to this !

(Raising up his hands vehemently to heaven.)

Eth. Be not so vehement : this will endanger
The little chance thou still may'st have for life.
The God we fear is merciful.

Ethw. Ay, he is merciful ; but may it reach —
O listen to me ! — Oswal I have murder'd,
And Edward, brave and gentle — Ay, this bites
With a fell tooth ! I vilely have enthrall'd ;
Of all his rights deprived. The loving Bertha :
Too well thou know'st what I have been to her —
Ah ! thinkest thou a thousand robed priests
Can pray down mercy on a soul so foul ?

Eth. The inward sighs of humble penitence
Rise to the ear of heav'n when peeled hymns
Are scatter'd with the sounds of common air ;
If I indeed may speak unto a king
Of low humility.

Ethw. Thy words bite keenly, friend. O king
me not !

Grant me but longer life, and thou shalt see
What brave amends I'll make for past offences.
Thou thinkest hardly of me ; ne'ertheless,
Rough as my warrior's life has been, good
thoughts
Have sometimes harbour'd here.

(Putting his hand on his heart.)

If I had lived,

It was my full intent that, in my power,
My people should have found prosperity :
I would have proved to them a gen'rous Lord.
If I had lived—— Ah ! think'st thou, Ethelbert,
There is indeed no hope ?

Eth. I may not flatter you.

Ethw. (*holding up his clasped hands.*)

Then heaven have mercy on a guilty soul !
Good Ethelbert, full well thou know'st that I
No coward am : from power of mortal thing
I never shrunk. O might I still contend
With spear and helm, and shield and brandish'd
blade !

But I must go where spear and helm and shield
Avail not :

Where the skill'd warrior, cas'd in iron, stands
Defenceless as the poor uncrusted worm.
Some do conceit that disembodied spirits
Have in them more capacity of woe
Than flesh and blood maintain. I feel appall'd:
Yes, Thane of Sexford, I do say appall'd.
For, ah ! thou know'st not in how short a space
The soul of man within him may be changed.

Ethw. I know it all too well. But be more
calm ;

Thou hast a task to do, and short perhaps
May be the time allow'd thee. True repentance
With reparation of offences past
Is ever yok'd. Declare it as thy will
That Edward do succeed unto his rights :
And for poor Bertha, she shall be my charge ;
I'll tend and cheer her in my quiet home.

Ethw. Thou dost prevent my boon : heaven
bless thee for it !

I give thee power to do what'er thou think'st
I living should have done, 'Tis all I can,
And gracious heaven accept it at my hands !

Eth. Amen, my friend ! I'll faithfully fulfil
Th' important trust—Ha ! how thy visage
changes !

Thy mind's exertion has outrun thy strength.
He faints away. Help ! who attends without ?

Enter SELRED with Attendants.

Support the king : whether a sudden faint
Or death be now upon him, trow I not,
But quickly call the queen.

Sel. Alas, my brother !

(*Assisting Eth. to raise Ethw.'s head.*)

Eth. Raise him gently, Selred.
For, if that life within him still remain,
It may revive him.

Sel. Ah, see how changed he is ! Alas, my
brother !

Pride of my father's house, is this thy end ?

Enter ELBURGA, Nobles, &c.

Elb. Let me approach unto my royal Lord. !
Good Ethelbert, thou long hast known thy king,
Look'd he e'er thus before ? (*looking on Ethw.*)

Eth. No, royal dame ; and yet 'tis but a faint ;
See, he revives again.

Ethw. (*opening his eyes.*) Who are about me
now ?

Eth. The queen and nobles.

Sel. And Selred, too, is here, my dearest Ethwald!

Ethw. (*holding out his hand to Sel.*)

Ay, noble brother, thou wert ever kind.
Faintness returns again; stand round my friends,
And hear my dying words. It is my will
That Ethelbert shall, after my decease,
With the concurrence of the nation's council,
The kingdom settle as may best appear
To his experienced wisdom, and retain
Until that settlement the kingly power.
Faintness returns again; I say no more.
Art thou displeas'd, my Selred?

Sel. (*kneeling and kissing his hand.*)

No, brother, let your dying will bereave me
Ev'n of my father's lands, and with my sword
I will maintain it.

Ethw. Thou art a gen'rous brother; fare thee well!

Elb. What, is the queen, indeed, so poor a thing
In Mercia's state, that she o'erpassed is,
Unhonour'd and unmention'd?

Ethw. (*to Elb. waving his hand faintly.*)

Be at peace!

Thou shalt have all things that become thy state.

(*To Attendants.*) Lower my head, I pray you.

First Offi. He faints again.

Sec. Offi. He will not hold it long:

The kingdom will be torn with dire contentions.
And the Northumbrian soon will raise his head.

Ethw. (raising himself eagerly with great vehemence.)

Northumberland ! Oh I did purpose soon,
With thrice five thousand of my chosen men,
To've compass'd his proud towers.
Death, death ! thou art at hand, and all is ended !

(Groans, and falls back upon the couch.)

First Offi. This is a faint from which I fear,
brave Thanes,
He will awake no more.

Sec. Offi. Say'st thou ? go nearer and observe
the face.

First Offi. If that mine eyes did ever death
behold,
This is a dead man's visage.

Sec. Offi. Let us retire. My good Lord Ethelbert,
You shall not find me backward in your service.

First Offi. Nor me.

Omnes. Nor any of us.

Eth. I thank you, Thanes ! 'Tis fit you should
retire ;

But Selred and myself, and, of your number,
Two chosen by yourselves, will watch the body.

(To Dwina, who supports Elburga, and seems soothing her.)

Ay, gentle Dwina, soothe your royal mistress,
And lead her hence.

(After looking stedfastly on the body.)

Think ye, indeed, that death hath dealt his
blow ?

First Off. Ah, yes, my Lord! that countenance
is death.

(*Selred kneels by the body, and hides his head.*)

Eth. Then peace be to his spirit!

A brave and daring soul is gone to rest.

Thus powerful death th' ambitious man arrests,
In midst of all his great and towering hopes,
With heart high swoln; as the omnipotent frost
Seizes the rough enchafed northern deep,
And all its mighty billows, heav'd aloft,
Boldly commixing with the clouds of heaven,
Are fix'd to rage no more.

(*The Curtain drops.*)

*very true - but the curtain should be drawn
at the end of the scene*

ETHWALD:

A TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.



PART SECOND.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN :

ETHWALD.
ETHELBERT.
SELRED.
EDWARD.
ALWY.
HEREULF.
HEXULF.
ONGAR.

Thanes, Soldiers, &c. &c.

WOMEN :

ELBURGA.
DWINA.

Ladies, Attendants, &c. &c.

ETHWALD.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A gloomy apartment in an old Saxon castle, with small grated windows very high from the ground. EDWARD is discovered, sitting by a table, and tracing figures with chalk upon it, which he frequently rubs out again ; at last, throwing away the chalk, he fixes his eyes upon the ground, and continues for some time in a melancholy musing posture. Enters to him the Keeper, carrying something in his hand.*

EDWARD.

WHAT brings thee now ? it surely cannot be
The time of food : my prison hours are wont
To fly more heavily.

Keep. It is not food : I bring wherewith, my
Lord,

To stop a rent in these old walls, that oft
Hath griev'd me, when I've thought of you
o' nights ;

Thro' it the cold wind visits you.

Ed. And let it enter ! it shall not be stopp'd.
Who visits me besides the winds of heaven ?
Who mourns with me but the sad sighing wind ?
Who bringeth to mine ear the mimic'd tones
Of voices once belov'd and sounds long past
But the light-wing'd and many voiced wind ?
Who fans the prisoner's lean and fever'd cheek
As kindly as the monarch's wreathed brows
But the free piteous wind ?
I will not have it stopp'd.

Keep. My Lord, the winter now creeps on
apace :

Hoar frost this morning, on our shelter'd fields
Lay thick, and glanced to the up-risen sun,
Which scarce had power to melt it.

Ed. Glanced to th' up-risen sun ! Ay, such
fair morns,
When ev'ry bush doth put its glory on,
Like to a gemmed bride ! Your rustics, now,
And early hinds, will set their clouted feet
Thro' silver webs, so bright and finely wrought
As royal dames ne'er fashion'd, yet plod on
Their careless way, unheeding.
Alas, how many glorious things there be
To look upon ! Wear not the forests, now,
Their latest coat of richly varied dyes ?

Keep. Yes, good my Lord, the cold chill year
advances,
Therefore, I pray you, let me close that wall.

Ed. I tell thee no, man ; if the north air
bites,
Bring me a cloak.—Where is thy dog to-day ?

Keep. Indeed I wonder that he came not with me

As he is wont.

Ed. Bring him, I pray thee, when thou com'st again.

He wags his tail and looks up to my face

With the assured kindliness of one

Who has not injur'd me. How goes your sport?

Keep. Nobly, my Lord; and much it pleases me

To see your mind again so sooth'd and calm.

Ed. I thank thee: know'st thou not that man is form'd

For varied states; to top the throne of power,

Or in a toad's hole squat, shut from the light?

He can bear all things; yet, if thou hast grace,

Lead me for once into the open air

To see the woods, and fields, and country round,

In the fair light of heaven.

Keep. I must not do it; I am sworn to this;

But all indulgence, suited to this state

Of close confinement, gladly will I grant.

Ed. A faithful servant to a wicked lord,

Whoe'er he be, art thou. Is Oswal dead?

Or does some powerful Thane his power usurp?

(*A pause.*)

Thou wilt not answer me. (*A horn heard without.*)

Keep. Ha! who is at the gate that sounds so boldly?

I'll mount this tower and see.

[*EXIT hastily, and Edward takes his seat again as before.*]

Keep. (without, calling down from the Tower.)
It is a company of armed men,
Bearing a royal ensign.

Ed. (starting from his seat.) Then let me rise
and brace my spirits up!
They bring me death or freedom!

Re-enter Keeper from the Tower.

(Eagerly to him.) What think'st thou of it?

Keep. I'll to the gate, and meet them instantly.

[EXIT, crossing over the stage hastily.]

Ed. (alone.) An it be death they'll do it
speedily,
And there's the end of all. Ah, liberty!
An it be thou, enlarger of man's self! —
My heart doth strangely beat as tho' it were.
I hear their steps already: they come quickly:
Ah! how step they who joyful tidings bear!

Keep. (calling without to Edw. before they enter.)

My Lord, my Lord! you're a free man again!

Ed. Am I? great God of heaven, how good
thou art!

Enter Two Thanes, conducted by the Keeper.

Ed. (accosting them.) Brave men, ye come
upon a blessed errand,
And let me bless you.

First Th. With joy unto ourselves we bring,
my Lord,
Your full enlargement from the highest power
That Mercia now obeys.

Ed. Not from king Oswal?

Sec. Th. No, most noble Ethling;
From the Lord Regent Ethelbert we come.

Ed. Mine uncle, then, is dead.

Sec. Th. E'en so, my Lord.

Ed. Ah! good and gentle, and to me most
kind! (*Weeps, hiding his face.*)

Died he peacefully?

First Th. He is at peace.

Ed. Ye are reserv'd with me.

But ye are wise, perhaps; time will declare it.
Give me your hands; ye are my loving friends.
And you, good guardian of this castle, too,
You have not been to me a surly keeper.

(*Taking the Thanes warmly by the hand, and
afterwards the Keeper.*)

(*A second horn sounds without very loud.*)

First Th. Ha! at our heels another messenger
So quickly sent. [EXIT Keep.

Sec. Th. What may this mean?

Ed. Nay, wait not for him here.

Let us go forth from these inclosing walls,
And meet him in the light and open day.

First Th. 'Tis one, I hope, sent to confirm our
errand:

How came he on so quickly?

Ed. Thou hopest, Thane? Oh! then thou
doubtest too. (*Pauses and looks earnestly in
their faces.*)

Enter ONGAR, conducted by the Keeper.

First Th. (*to Ongar.*) Thine errand?

Ongar. That thou shalt know, and the authority
Which warrants it. You here are come, grave
Thanes,

Upon the word of a scarce-named regent,
To set this pris'ner free ; but I am come
With the sign'd will of Ethwald to forbid it :
And here I do retain him. (*Laying hold of Edw.*)

First Th. Loose thy unhallow'd grasp, thou
base deceiver !

Nor face us out with a most wicked tale.
We left the king at his extremity,
And long ere this he must have breath'd his last.

Ongar. Art thou in league with death to know
so well

When he perforce must come to sick men's beds ?
King Ethwald lives, and will live longer too
Than traitors wish for. Look upon these orders :
Knowest thou not his sign ? (*shewing his warrant.*)
(*Both Thanes after reading it.*) 'Tis wonderful !

Ongar. Is it so wonderful
A wounded man, fainting with loss of blood
And rack'd with pain, should seem so near his
end,

And yet recover ?

Sec. Th. Ethwald then lives ?

Ongar. Ay, and long live the king !

Ed. What words are these ?

I am as one who in a misty dream,
Listens to things wild and fantastical,
Which no congruity nor kindred bear

To preconceiv'd impressions.

King Ethwald, said ye? and is Ethwald king?

First Th. He did succeed your uncle.

Ed. And by his orders am I here detain'd?

First Th. Even so, my Lord.

Ed. It cannot be. (*Turning to Sec. Th.*) Thou say'st not so, good Thane?

Sec. Th. I do believe it.

Ed. Nay, nay; ye are deceived.

(*Turning to Ongar.*) What say'st thou?

Was I by Ethwald's orders here imprison'd?

Ongar. Yes, yes; who else had power or will to do it?

Ed. (*holding his clasp'd hands.*) Then hope, farewell!

My gleam is dark; my rest is in the dust!

O that an enemy had done this wrong!

But Ethwald, thou who to my heart wert press'd

As dearest brother never was by him

Who shar'd his mother's breast! Thou in whose fame

I gloried — I who spoke not of my own! —

When shouting crowds proclaimed thy honour'd name,

I ever join'd with an ungrudging heart:

Yea, such true kindred feeling bore I to him,

E'en at his praise I wept. I pray you, sirs!

(*Bursting into tears.*) This hath overcome me.

Ongar. (*to Thanes.*) Why do you tarry here?

You've seen my warrant.

Depart with me and leave the prisoner.

First Th. What, shall we leave him in this piteous state,
Lone and uncomforted ?

Ongar. It must be so, there is no time to lose.
Come, follow me ; my men are at the gate.

(As they are all about to depart, Edward, starting furiously forward to the door, flies upon Ongar, and seizes him by the throat.)

Ed. What ! leave me here, fiend ! Am I not a man,

Created free to breathe the circling air
And range the boundless earth as thy base self,
Or thy more treach'rous lord ? thou tyrant's slave !

(As he struggles with him, Ongar calls loudly, and immediately the apartment is filled with armed men, who separate them.)

Ongar. *(to his Followers.)* Remove that mad-man to the inner chamber.

Keeper, attend your duty. *(To the Thanes.)* Follow me. [EXEUNT Ongar and Thanes, &c.

Keep. *(to Edw. as some remaining armed men are leading him off by the opposite side.)*

Alas ! alas ! my Lord, to see you thus,
In closer bondage ! Pray ! good soldiers, pray !
Let him in this apartment still remain :
He'll be secure ; I'll pledge my life——

Ed. No, no !

Let them enchain me in a pitchy gulph !
'Twere better than this den of weariness
Which my soul loathes. What care I now for
ease ? [EXEUNT Ed. led off by the men.

SCENE II.

An apartment in the royal castle. Enter ETHELBERT meeting with SELRED, who enters at the same time from a door at the bottom of the stage.

Eth. How did'st thou leave the King?

Sel. Recovering strength with every passing hour.

His spirits too, that were so weak and gloomy,
From frequent fainting and the loss of blood,
Now buoyant rise, and much assist the cure
Which all regard as wonderful. •

Eth. It has deceiv'd us, yet I've heard of such.

Sel. Thou lookest sadly on it: how is this?
With little cost of thought I could explain
In any man but thee that cloudy brow;
But well I know thou didst not prize the power
With which thou wert invested.

Eth. Selred, this hasty gloom will prove too short

To work in Ethwald's mind the change we
look'd for.

And yet he promis'd well.

Sel. Ay, and will well perform; mistrust him not.

I must confess, nature has form'd his mind
Too restless and aspiring; and of late,
Having such mighty objects in his grasp,
He has too reckless been of others' rights.
But, now that all is gain'd, mistrust him not:
He'll prove a noble king; a good one too.

Eth. Thou art his brother.

Sel. And thou his friend.

Eth. I stand reprov'd before thee.

A friend, indeed, should gentler thoughts maintain,

And so I will endeavour.

Sel. Give me thy valiant hand; full well I know
The heart which it pertains to.

Eth. I hear him, now, within his chamber stir.

Sel. Thou'lt move him best alone. God speed
thy zeal !

I'll stand by thee the while and mark his eye.

*(Eth. remains on the front of the stage whilst
Ethwald enters behind him from the door at
the bottom of the stage, leaning upon an
attendant.)*

Ethw. (to Sel. as he goes up to Eth.)

How, Ethelbert, our friend, so deep in thought?
(To the Attendant.) Leave me awhile, methinks
a brother's arm

Will be a kindlier staff.

[EXIT Attendant, and he leans upon Sel.]

How, Ethelbert, my friend !

What vision from the nether world of sprites
Now rises to thine eyes, thus on the ground
So fix'd and sternly bent ?

Eth. Pardon, my Lord ! my mind should now
be turn'd

To cheerful thoughts, seeing you thus restor'd.
How fares it with you ?

Ethw. E'en as with one, on a rude mountain's
side,

Who suddenly in seeming gloom inclosed

Of drizzly night, athwart the wearing mist
Sees the veil'd sun break forth in heaven's wide
arch.

And shewing still a lengthen'd day before him.
As with a trav'ler in a gloomy path,
Whose close o'er-shaded end did scare his fancy
With forms of hidden ill; who, wending on
With fearful steps, before his eyes beholds
I' th' sudden burst a fair and wide expanse
Of open country, rich in promis'd good.
As one o'erwhelmed in the battle's shock,
Who, all oppress'd and number'd with the slain,
Smother'd and lost, with sudden impulse
strengthen'd,

Shakes the foul load of dead men from his back,
And finds himself again standing erect,
Unmaim'd and vigorous. As one who stood —
But it may tire thee with such ample scope
To tell indeed how it doth fare with me.

Eth. You truly are from a dark gloom restor'd
To cheerful day; and, if the passing shade
Has well impress'd your mind, there lies before
you

A prospect fair, indeed. Ay, fairer far
Than that the gloom obscured.

Ethw. How sayest thou?

Eth. Did not that seeming cloud of death ob-
scure

To your keen forecast eye tumultuous scenes
Of war and strife, and conquest yet to come,
Bought with your people's blood? but now, my
Ethwald,

Your chasten'd mind, so rich in good resolves,
Hath stretch'd before it, future prospect fair,
Such as a God might please.

Ethw. How so, good Ethelbert?

Eth. And dost thou not perceive? O see before thee

Thy native land, freed from the ills of war
And hard oppressive power, a land of peace!
Where yellow fields unspoil'd, and pastures
green,
Mottled with herds and flocks, who crop secure
Their native herbage, nor have ever known
A stranger's stall, smile gladly.
See, thro' its tufted alleys to heaven's roof
The curling smoke of quiet dwellings rise;
Whose humble masters, with forgotten spear
Hung on the webbed wall, and cheerful face
In harvest fields embrown'd, do gaily talk
Over their ev'ning meal, and bless king Eth-
wald,

The valiant, yet the peaceful, whose wise rule,
Firm and rever'd, has brought them better days
Than e'er their fathers knew.

Ethw. A scene, indeed, fair and desirable;
But, ah, how much confin'd! Were it not work
A God befitting, with exerted strength,
By one great effort to enlarge its bounds,
And spread the blessing wide?

Eth. (*starting back from him.*)

Ha! there it is! that serpent bites thee still!
O spurn it, strangle it! let it rise no more!

Sel. (*laying his hand affectionately on Ethwald's breast.*)

My dearest brother, let not such wild thoughts
Again possess your mind!

Ethw. Go to! go to! (*to Sel.*) But, Ethelbert,
thou'rt mad. (*Turning angrily to Eth.*)

Eth. Not mad, my royal friend, but something
griev'd

To see your restless mind still bent on that
Which will to you no real glory bring,
And to your hapless people many woes.

Ethw. Thou greatly errest from my meaning,
friend.

As truly as thyself I do regard
My people's weal, and will employ the power
Heaven trusts me with, for that important end.
But were it not ignoble to confine
In narrow bounds the blessed power of blessing,
Lest, for a little space, the face of war
Should frown upon us? He who will not give
Some portion of his ease, his blood, his wealth,
For others' good, is a poor frozen churl.

Eth. Well, then again a simple warriour be,
And thine own ease, and blood, and treasure
give:

But whilst thou art a king, and would'st bestow
On people not thine own the blessed gift
Of gentle rule, earn'd by the public force
Of thine own subjects, thou dost give away
That o'er the which thou hast no right. Frown not:
I will assert it, crown'd and royal Lord,
Tho' to your ears full rude the sound may be.

Ethw. Chaf'd Thane, be more restrain'd. Thou knowest well,
That, as a warlike chieftain, never yet
The meanest of my soldiers grasp'd his spear
To follow me constrain'd ; and as a King,
Think'st thou I'll be less noble ?

Sel. Indeed, good Ethelbert, thou art too warm ;
Thou dealest hardly with him.

Eth. I know, tho' peace dilates the heart of man,
And makes his stores increase, his count'nance smile,

He is by nature form'd, like savage beasts,
To take delight in war.

'Tis a strong passion in his bosom lodged,
For ends most wise, curb'd and restrain'd to be ;
And they who for their own designs do take
Advantage of his nature, act in truth,
Like cruel hinds who spirit the poor cock
To rend and tear his fellow.

O thou ! whom I so often in my arms,
A bold and gen'rous boy have fondly press'd,
And now do proudly call my sov'reign lord,
Be not a cruel master ! O be gentle !
Spare Mercian blood ! Goodness and power do
make

Most meet companions. 'The great Lord of all,
Before whose awful presence, short-while since,
Thou did'st expect to stand, almighty is,
Also most merciful :

And the bless'd Being he to earth did send
To teach our soften'd hearts to call him Father,

Most meekly did confine his heavenly power
Unto the task assign'd him. Think of this.
O! dost thou listen to me?

Ethw. (moved and softened.)

Yes, good Ethelbert.

Be thou more calm: we will consider of it.
We should desire our people's good, and peace
Makes them to flourish. We confess all this;
But circumstance oft takes away the power
Of acting on it. Still our Western neighbours
Are turbulent and bold; and, for the time,
Tho' somewhat humbled, they again may rise
And force us to the field.

Sel. No, fear it not! they are inclin'd to peace;
Tidings I've learnt, sent by a trusty messenger,
Who from Caernarvon is with wond'rous speed
But just arriv'd: their valiant prince is dead.
A sudden death has snatch'd him in his prime;
And a weak infant, under tutorage
Of three contending chiefs of little weight,
Now rules the state, whom, thou may'st well per-
ceive,

Can give thee no disturbance.

*Ethw. (eagerly, with his eyes lightening up, and
his whole frame agitated.)*

A trusty messenger has told thee this?
O send him to me quickly! still fair fortune
Offers her favours freely. Send him quickly!
Ere yet aware of my returning health,
Five thousand men might without risk be led
E'en to their castle walls.

Eth. What, mean'st thou this?

Uprous'd again unto this dev'lish pitch?

Oh, it is horrid!

Ethw. (in great heat.) Be restrained, Thane.

Eth. Be thou restrained, king. See how thou art,

Thus feebly tott'ring on those wasted limbs!

And would'st thou spoil the weak? (*Observing*

Ethw. who staggers from being agitated beyond his strength.)

Ethw. (pushing away Selred who supports him.)

I do not want thine aid: I'm well and vig'rous:

My heart beats strongly, and my blood is warm;

Tho' there are those who spy my weakness out

To shackle me withal. Ho, thou without!

Enter his Attendant, and Ethw. taking hold of him, walks across the stage; then turning about to Sel. and Eth.

Brother, send quickly for your trusty messenger;

And so good day. Good morning, Thane of

Sexford. (*Looking sternly to Ethelbert.*)

Eth. Good morning, Mercia's king.

[*EXEUNT by opposite sides, frowningly.*]

SCENE III.

A grand apartment, with a chair of state. Enter HEXULF and ALWY, engaged in close conversation.

Alwy. (continuing to speak.) Distrust it not;
The very honours and high exaltation
Of Ethelbert, that did your zealous ire

So much provoke, are now the very tools
With which we'll work his ruin.

Hex. But still proceed with caution; gain the
queen;
For she, from ev'ry hue of circumstance,
Must be his enemy.

Alwy. I have done that already.
By counterfeiting Ethwald's signature
Whilst in that still and deathlike state he lay,
To hinder Ethelbert's rash treach'rous haste
From setting Edward free, I have done that
For which, tho' Ethwald thanks me, I must needs,
On bended knee, for courtly pardon sue.
The queen I have address'd with humble suit
My cause to plead with her great Lord, and she
Her most magnificent and high protection
Be of our party, e'en if on her mind
No other motive press'd.

Hex. I doubt it not, and yet I fear her spirit,
Proud and aspiring, will desire to rule
More than befits our purpose.

Alwy. Fear it not.
It is the shew and worship of high state
That she delights in more than real power :
She has more joy in stretching forth her hand
And saying, " I command," than, in good truth,
Seeing her will obey'd.

Enter QUEEN, with DWINA and Attendants.

Hex. Saint Alban bless you, high and royal
dame !

We are not here, in an intruding spirit,
Before your royal presence.

Qu. I thank you, good lord bishop, with your friend.

And nothing doubt of your respect and duty.

Alwy. Thanks, gracious queen ! This good and holy man

Thus far supports me in your royal favour,
Which is the only rock that I would cling to,
Willing to give me friendly countenance.

Qu. You have done well, good Alwy, and have need

Of thanks more than of pardon ; nevertheless,
If any trouble light on thee for this,
A royal hand shall be stretch'd forth to save you,
Whom none in Mercia, whosoe'er they be,
Will venture to oppose. I will protect thee,
And have already much inclin'd the king
To favour thee.

Alwy. (kneeling and kissing her hand.)

Receive my humble thanks, most honour'd queen.
My conscience tells me I have merited,
Of you and of the king, no stern rebuke ;
But that dark cunning Thane has many wiles
To warp men's minds e'en from their proper
good.

He has attempted, or report speaks falsely,
To lure king Ethwald to resign his crown.
What may he not attempt ! it makes me shrink !
He trusts his treasons to no mortal men :
Fiends meet him in his hall at dead of night,
And are his counsellors.

Queen. (holding up her hands.)

Protect us, heaven !

Hex. Saint Alban will protect you, gracious queen.

Trust me, his love for pious Oswal's daughter
Will guard you in the hour of danger. Hark !
The king approaches. (*Flourish of trumpets.*)

Qu. Yes, at this hour he will receive in state
The bold address of those seditious Thanes,
Clam'ring for peace, when fair occasion smiles,
And beckons him to arm and follow her.

Hex. We know it well ; of whom Thane
Ethelbert,
In secret is the chief, although young Hereulf
By him is tutor'd in the spokesman's office.

*Enter ETHWALD, attended by many Thanes and
Officers of the Court, &c.*

Qu. (*presenting Alwy to Ethw.*) My Lord, a
humble culprit at your feet,
Supported by my favour, craves forgiveness.

(*Alwy kneels, and Ethw. raises him graciously.*)

Ethw. I grant his suit, supported by the
favour

Of that warm sense I wear within my breast
Of his well-meaning zeal. (*Looking contemptu-
ously at the Queen, who turns haughtily away.*)

But wherefore Alwy
Didst thou not boldly come to me at first
And tell thy fault? Might not thy former services
Out-balance well a greater crime than this?

Alwy. I so, indeed, had done, but a shrewd
Thane,
Of mind revengeful, and most penetrating,

Teaches us caution in whate'er regards
His dealings with the state. I fear the man.

Ethw. And wherefore dost thou fear him?

Alwy. (*mysteriously.*) He has a cloudy brow,
a stubborn gait ;

His dark soul is shut up from mortal man,
And deeply broods upon its own conceits
Of right and wrong.

Hex. He has a soul black with foul atheism
And heresies abominable. Nay,
He has a tongue of such persuasive art,
That all men listen to him.

Qu. (*eagerly.*) More than men :
Dark spirits meet him at the midnight hour,
And horrid converse hold.

Ethw. No more, I pray you ! Ethelbert I know.

Qu. Indeed, indeed, my Lord, you know him
not !

Ethw. Besilent, wife. (*Turning to Hex. and Al.*)
My tried and faithful Alwy,
And pious Hexulf, in my private closet
We further will discourse on things of moment,
At more convenient time.
The leagued Thanes advance. Retire, Elburga :
Thou hast my leave. I gave thee no command
To join thy presence to this stern solemnity.
Soft female grace adorns the festive hall,
And sheds a brighter lustre on high days
Of pageant state ; but in an hour like this,
Destin'd for gravest audience, 'tis unmeet.

Qu. What, is the queen an empty bauble, then,
To gild thy state withal ?

Ethw. The queens of Mercia, first of Mercian
dames,

Still fair example give of meek obedience
To their good Lords. This is their privilege.

(Seeing that she delays to go.)

It is my will. A good day to your highness.

Qu. (aside as she goes off.) Be silent, wife!

This Mollo's son doth say

Unto the royal offspring of a king. [EXIT Queen,
frowning angrily, and followed by Dwina
and Attendants.

*(The Thanes, who entered with Ethwald, and
during his conversation with Alwy, &c.
had retired to the bottom of the stage, now
come forward.)*

Ethw. Now wait we for those grave and slug-
gish chiefs,

Who would this kingdom, fam'd for warlike
Thanes,

Change into mere provision-land to feed
A dull unwarlike race.

Alwy. Ay, and our castles,
Whose lofty walls are darken'd with the spoils
Of glorious war, to barns and pinning folds,
Where our brave hands, instead of sword and
spear,

The pruning knife and shepherd's staff must
grasp.

Hex. True; sinking you, in such base toils
unskill'd,

Beneath the wiser carl. This is their wish,

But heaven and our good saint will bring to
nought
Their wicked machinations.

Enter an Officer of the Castle.

Offi. Th' assembled Thanes, my Lord, attend
without.

Ethw. Well, let them enter. [EXIT *Offi.*
Our stool beneath us will not shake, I trust,
Being so fenced round. (*Taking his seat, and bow-
ing courteously with a smiling countenance
to the Chiefs, &c. who range themselves
near him.*)

*Enter several Thanes, with HEREULF at their head,
and presently after followed by ETHELBERT.*

Her. (*stretching out his hand with respectful dig-
nity.*) Our king and sire, in true and humble duty
We come before you, earnestly intreating
Your royal ear to our united voice

Ethw. Mine ear is ever open to the voice
Of faithful duty.

Her. We are all men who, in th' embattled field,
Have by your side the front of danger braved,
With greater lack of prudence than of daring ;
And have opposed our rough and scarred breasts
To the fell push of war, with liberality
Not yielding to the bravest of your Thanes,
The sons of warlike sires. But we are men
Who, in our cheerful halls, have also been
Lords of the daily feast ; where, round our boards,
The hoary headed warrior, from the toil
Of arms releas'd, with the cheer'd stranger smiled :

Who in the humble dwellings of our hinds,
Have seen a numerous and hardy race,
Eating the bread of labour cheerfully,
Dealt to them with no hard nor churlish hand.
We, therefore, stand with graceful boldness forth,
The advocates of those who wish for peace.
Worn with our rude and long continued wars,
Our native land wears now the altered face
Of an uncultur'd wild. To her fair fields,
With weeds and thriftless docks now shagged o'er,
The aged grandsire, bent and past his toil,
Who in the sunny nook had plac'd his seat
And thought to toil no more, leads joyless forth
His widow'd daughters and their orphan train,
The master of a silent, cheerless band.
The half-grown stripling, urged before his time
To manhood's labour, steps, with feeble limbs
And sallow cheek, around his unroof'd cot.
The mother on her last remaining son
With fearful bodings looks. The cheerful sound
Of whistling ploughmen, and the reaper's song,
And the flail's lusty stroke is heard no more.
The youth and manhood of our land are laid
In the cold earth, and shall we think of war?
O valiant Ethwald! listen to the calls
Of gentle pity, in the brave most graceful,
Nor, for the lust of more extended sway,
Shed the last blood of Mercia. War is honour-
able

In those who do their native rights maintain;
In those whose swords an iron barrier are
Between the lawless spoiler and the weak:

But is in those who draw th' offensive blade
For added power or gain, sordid and despicable
As meanest office of the worldly churl.

Ethw. Chiefs and assembled Thanes, I much
commend

The love you bear unto your native land.
Shame to the son nurs'd on her gen'rous breast
Who loves her not! and be assured that I,
Her reared child, her soldier, and her king,
In true and warm affection yield to none
Of all who have upon her turfy lap
Thus infant gambol held. To you her weal
Is gain and pleasure; glory 'tis to me.
To you her misery is loss and sorrow;
To me disgrace and shame. Of this be satisfied;

I feel her sacred claims, which these high ensigns
Have fastened on me, and I will fulfil them:
But for the course and manner of performance,
Be that unto the royal wisdom left,
Strengthen'd by those appointed by the state
To aid and counsel it. Ye have our leave,
With all respect and favour to retire.

Her. We will retire, king Ethwald, as becomes

Free, independent Thanes, who do of right
Approach or quit at will the royal presence,
And lacking no permission.

Alcy. What, all so valiant in this princely
hall,

Ye who would shrink from the fair field of war,
Where soldiers should be bold?

Her. (laying his hand on his sword.)

Thou ly'st, mean boastful hireling of thy Lord,
And shalt be punish'd for it.

First Th. (of Ethwald's side.)

And dar'st thou threaten, mouth of bold sedition?
We will maintain his words. (*Draws his sword,*
and all the Thanes on the King's side do the
same. Hereulf and the Thanes of his side
also draw their swords.)

First Th. (of Hereulf's side.)

Come on, base trockers of your country's blood.

First Th. (of Ethwald's side.)

Have at ye, rebel cowards!

Ethw. (rising from his seat, and standing between
the two parties in a commanding posture.)

I do command you: peace and silence, chiefs!
He who with word or threat'ning gesture dares
The presence of his king again outrage,
I put without the covert of the law,
And on the instant punish. (*They all put up their*
swords, and Ethwald, after looking round
him for some moments with commanding
sternness, walks off majestically, followed
by his Thanes.)

Ethelbert. (casting up his eyes to heaven as he
turns to follow Hereulf and his party.)

Ah, Mercia, Mercia! on red fields of carnage
Bleed thy remaining sons, and carrion birds
Tear the cold limbs that should have turn'd thy
soil. [EXEUNT *the two different parties by*
opposite sides.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A small cavern, in which is discovered a Wizard, sitting by a fire of embers, baking his scanty meal of parched corn, and counting out some money from a bag ; a book and other things belonging to his art are strewed near him on the ground.*

Wiz. (alone.) Thanks to the restless soul of Mollo's son !

Well thrives my trade. Here, the last hoarded coin

Of the spare widow, trembling for the fate
Of her remaining son, and the gay jewel
Of fearful maid, who steals by fall of eve,
With muffled face, to learn her warrior's doom,
Lie in strange fellowship ; so doth misfortune
Make strange acquaintance meet.

Enter a Scout.

Brother, thou com'st in haste ; what news, I pray ?

Scout. Put up thy book, and bag, and wizard's wand,

This is no time for witchery and wiles,
Thy cave, I trow, will soon be fill'd with those,
Who are by present ills too roughly shent
To look thro' vision'd spells on those to come.

Wiz. What thou would'st tell me, tell in plainer words.

Scout. Well, plainly then, Ethwald, who thought full surely

The British, in their weak-divided state,
To the first onset of his arms would yield
Their ill-defended towers, has found them strengthen'd

With aid from Wessex, and unwillingly
Led back with cautious skill the Mercian troops;
Meaning to tempt the foe, as it is thought,
To follow him into our open plains,
Where they must needs with least advantage fight.

Wiz. Who told thee this?

Scout. Mine eyes have seen them. Scarcely three miles off,

The armies, at this moment, are engaged
In bloody battle. On my way I met
A crowd of helpless women, from their homes
Who fly with terror, each upon her back
Bearing some helpless babe or valued piece
Of household goods snatch'd up in haste. I hear
Their crowding steps e'en now within your cave:
They follow close behind.

Enter a crowd of Women, young and old, some leading children and carrying infants on their backs or in their arms, others carrying bundles and pieces of household stuff.

Wiz. Who are ye, wretched women,
Who, all so pale and haggard, bear along

Those hapless infants, and those seeming wrecks,
From desolation saved? What do you want?

First Wom. Nought but the friendly shelter
of your cave,

For now or house, or home, or blazing hearth,
Good Wizard, we have none.

Wiz. And are the armies then so near your
dwellings?

First Wom. Ay, round them, in them the
loud battle clangs.

Within our very walls fierce spearmen push,
And weapon'd warriors cross their clashing
blades :

Sec. Wom. Ah, woe is me! our warm and
cheerful hearths,

And rushed floors, whereon our children play'd,
Are now the bloody lair of dying men.

Old. Wom. Ah, woe is me! those yellow thatch-
ed roofs,

Which I have seen these sixty years and ten,
Smoking so sweetly 'midst our tufted thorns,
And the turf'd graves wherein our fathers sleep!

Young Wom. Ah, woe is me! my little help-
less babes!

Now must some mossy rock or shading tree
Be your cold home, and the wild haws your food.
No cheerful blazing fire and seething pot
Shall now, returning from his daily toil,
Your father cheer! if that, if that indeed
Ye have a father still. (*Bursting into tears.*)

Third Wom. Alack, alack! of all my goodly stuff
I've saved but only this! my winter's webs,

And all the stores that I so dearly saved!
I thought to have them to my dying day!

Enter a Young Man leading in an Ideot.

Young Wom. (running up to him.)

Ah, my dear Swithick! art thou safe indeed?
Why didst thou leave me?

Young Man. To save our ideot brother, see'st
thou here?

I could not leave him in that pitiless broil.

Young Wom. Well hast thou done! poor help-
less Balderkin!

We've fed thee long, unweeting of our care,
And in our little dwelling still thou'st held
The warmest nook; and wheresoe'er we be,
So shalt thou still, albeit thou know'st it not.

Enter Man carrying an Old Man on his back.

Young Man. And see here, too, our neighbour
Edwin comes,

Bearing his bed-rid father on his back.

Come in, good man. How dost thou, aged neigh-
bour?

Cheer up again! thou shalt be shelter'd still;
The Wizard has receiv'd us.

Wiz. True, good folks;

I wish my means were better for your sakes.
But we are crowded here; that winding passage
Leads us into an inner cave full wide,
Where we may take our room and freely breathe;
Come, let us enter there.

[EXEUNT, *all following the Wizard into the
inner cave.*]

SCENE II.

A field of battle strewed with slain, and some people seen upon the back ground searching amongst the dead bodies. Enter HEREULF and ETHELBERT.

Her. (stopping short, and holding up his hands.)
Good mercy ! see at what a bloody price
Ethwald this doubtful victory has purchased,
That in the lofty height to which he climbs
A little step will be of small advantage.

Eth. (not attending to him, and after gazing for some time on the field.)

So thus ye lie, who, with the morning sun,
Rose cheerily, and girt your armour on
With all the vigour, and capacity,
And comeliness of strong and youthful men.
Ye also, taken in your manhood's wane,
With grizzled pates, from mates, whose wither'd
 hands
For some good thirty years had smooth'd your
 couch :

Alas ! and ye whose fair and early growth
Did give you the similitude of men
Ere your fond mothers ceas'd to tend you still,
As nurselings of their care, ye lie together !
Alas ! alas ! and many now there be,
Smiling and crowing on their mother's breast,
Twining, with all their little infant ways,

Around her hopeful heart, who shall, like these,
Be laid i' the dust.

Her. Ay, so it needs must be, since Mollo's son
Thinks Mercia all too strait for his proud sway.
But here comes those who search amongst the
dead

For their lost friends; retire, and let us mark
them. *(They withdraw to one side.)*

*Enter Two Cairls, meeting a Third, who enters
by the opposite side.*

First Cairl. *(to Third.)* Thou hast been o'er the
field?

Third Cairl. I have, good friend.

Sec. Cairl. Thou hast seen a rueful sight.

Third Cairl. Yes, I have seen that which no
other sight

Can from my fancy wear. Oh! there be some
Whose writhed features, fix'd in all the strength
Of grappling agony, do stare upon you,
With their dead eyes half open'd. —

And there be some, struck thro' with bristling darts,
Whose clenched hands have torn the pebbles up;
Whose gnashing teeth have ground the very
sand.

Nay; some I've seen among those bloody heaps,
Defaced and 'reft e'en of the form of men,
Who in convulsive motion yet retain
Some shreds of life more horrible than death:
I've heard their groans, oh, oh!

(A voice from the ground.) Baldwick!

Third Cairl. What voice is that? it comes from
some one near.

First Cairl. See, yon stretch'd body moves its
bloody hand :

It must be him.

(*Voice again.*) Baldwick !

Third Cairl. (*going up to the body from whence
the voice came.*)

Who art thou, wretched man? I know thee not.

Voice. Ah, but thou dost ! I have sat by thy
fire,

And heard thy merry tales, and shar'd thy meal.

Third Cairl. Good holy saints ! and art thou
Athelbald ?

Woe ! woe is me to see thee in such case !

What shall I do for thee ?

Voice. If thou hast any love or mercy in thee,
Turn me on my face that I may die ;
For lying thus, see'st thou this flooded gash ?
The glutting blood so bolsters up my life
I cannot die.

Third Cairl. I will, good Athelbald. Alack
the day !

That I should do for thee so sad a service !

(*Turns the soldier on his face.*)

Voice. I thank thee, friend, farewell ! (*dies.*)

Third Cairl. Farewell ! farewell ! a merry soul
thou wert,

And sweet thy ploughman's whistle in our fields.

Sec. Cairl. (*starting with horror.*) Good heaven
forefend ! it moves !

First Cairl. What dost thou see ?

Sec. Cairl. Look on that bloody corse, so
smear'd and mangled,
That it has lost all form of what it was ;
It moves ! it moves ! there is life in it still.

First Cairl. Methought it spoke, but faint and
low the sound.

Third Cairl. Ha ! didst thou hear a voice ?
we'll go to it.

Who art thou ? Oh ! who art thou ? (*To a fallen
warriour, who makes signs to him to pull
something from his breast.*)

Yes, from thy breast ; I understand the sign.
(*Pulling out a band or 'kerchief from his breast.*)

It is some maiden's pledge.

Fallen Warriour. (*making signs.*) Upon mine
arm,

I pray thee, on mine arm.

Third Cairl. I'll do it, but thy wounds are past
all binding.

Warriour. She who will search for me doth
know this sign.

Third Cairl. Alack, alack : he thinks of some
sad maid !

A rueful sight she'll see ! He moves again :
Heaven grant him peace ! I'd give a goodly sum
To see thee dead, poor wretch !

Enter a Woman, wailing and wringing her hands.

Sec. Cairl. Ha ! who comes wailing here ?

Third Cairl. Some wretched mother who has
lost her son :

I met her searching 'midst the farther dead,
And heard her piteous moan.

Mother. I rear'd him like a little playful kid,
 And ever by my side, where'er I went,
 He blithely trotted. And full soon, I ween,
 His little arms did strain their growing strength
 To bear my burden. Ay, and long before
 He had unto a stripling's height attain'd,
 He ever would my widow's cause maintain
 With all the steady boldness of a man.
 I was no widow then.

Sec. Cairl. Be comforted, good mother.

Mother. What says't thou to me? Know'st
 thou where he lies?

If thou hast kindness in thee, tell me truly;
 For dead or living still he is mine all,
 And let me have him.

Third Cairl. (*aside to Second.*) Lead her away,
 good friend; I know her now.
 Her boy is lying with the farther dead,
 Like a fell'd sapling; lead her from the field.

[*EXEUNT Mother and Sec. Cairl.*

First Cairl. But who comes now, with such
 distracted gait,
 Tossing her snowy arms unto the wind,
 And gazing wildly o'er each mangled corse?

*Enter a Young Woman, searching distractedly
 amongst the dead.*

Young Wom. No, no! thou art not here! thou
 art not here!
 Yet, if thou be like these, I shall not know thee.
 Oh! if they have so gash'd thee o'er with
 wounds,
 And marr'd thy comely form! I'll not believe it.

Until these very eyes have seen thee dead,
 These very hands have press'd on thy cold heart,
 I'll not believe it.

Third Cairl. Ah, gentle maiden! many a maiden's love,

And many a goodly man lies on this field.

Young Wom. I know, too true it is, but none like him.

Liest thou, indeed, amongst those grisly heaps?
 O thou! who ever wert of all most fair!

If heaven hath suffer'd this, amen, amen!

Whilst I have strength to crawl upon the earth,
 I'll search thee out, and be, where'er thou art,
 Thy mated love, e'en with the grisly dead.

(Searching again amongst the dead, she perceives the band round the arm of the fallen Warriour, and uttering a loud shriek, falls senseless upon the ground. The Cairls run to her assistance, with Ethelbert and Hereulf, who come forward from the place they had withdrawn to; Hereulf clenching his hand, and muttering curses upon Mollo's son, as he crosses the stage. The scene closes.)

SCENE III.

A Castle not far from the field of battle. Enter ETHWALD and ALWY, talking as they enter.

Ethw. (calling angrily to some one off the stage.)

And see they do not linger on the road,
 With laggard steps; I will brook no delay.

(*To ALWY.*) Why, even my very messengers, of late

Slothful and sleepy-footed have become :
 They too must cross my will. (*Throxe himself upon
 a seat, and sits for some time silent and gloomy.*)

Alwy. Your highness seems disturb'd.

What tho' your arms, amidst those British hills,
 Have not, as they were wont, victorious prov'd,
 And home retreating, even on your own soil,
 You've fought a doubtful battle: luckless turns
 Will often cross the lot of greatest kings;
 Let it not so o'ercome your noble spirit.

Ethw. Thinkest thou it o'ercomes me?

(*Rising up proudly.*)

Thou judgest poorly. I am form'd to yield
 To no opposed pressure, nor my purpose
 With crossing chance or circumstance to change.
 I, in my march, to this attained height
 Have moved still with an advancing step,
 Direct and onward;
 But now the mountain's side more rugged grows,
 And he who would the cloudy summit gain,
 Must oft into its cragged rents descend
 The higher but to mount.

Alwy. Or rather say, my Lord, that having
 gain'd

Its cloudy summit, there you must contend
 With the rude tempests that do beat upon it.

Ethw. (*smiling contemptuously.*)

Is this thy fancy? Are thy thoughts of Ethwald
 So poorly limited, that thou dost think
 He has already gain'd his grandeur's height?
 Know that the lofty point which oft appears,
 To him who stands beneath, the mountain's top,

Is to the daring climber who hath reach'd it,
Only a breathing place, from whence he sees
Its real summit, bright and heaven illum'd,
Towering majestic, grand, above him far
As is the lofty spot on which he stands
To the dull plain below.

The British once subdued, Northumberland,
Thou seest well, could not withstand our arms.
It too must fall; and with such added strength,
What might not be achiev'd? Ay, by this arm!
All that the mind suggests, even England's
crown,

United and entire. Thou gazest on me.
I know full well the state is much exhausted
Of men and means; and those curs'd Mercian
women

To cross my purposes, with hag-like spite,
Do nought but females bear. But I will onward.
Still conscious of its lofty destination,
My spirit swells, and will not be subdued.

Alwy. I, chidden, bow, and yield with admir-
ation

Unto the noble grandeur of your thoughts.
But lowering clouds arise; events are adverse;
Subdue your secret enemies at home,
And reign securely o'er the ample realm
You have so bravely won.

Ethw. What! have I thro' the iron fields of war
Proudly before th' admiring gaze of men,
Unto this point with giant steps held on,
Now to become a dwarf? Have I this crown
In bloody battles won, mocking at death,

To wear it now as those to whom it comes
By dull and leaden-paced inheritance?
As the dead shepherd's scrip and knotted crook
Go to his milk-fed son? Like those dull images,
On whose calm, tamed brows the faint impression
Of far preceding heroes faintly rests,
As the weak colours of a fading rainbow
On a spent cloud?
I'd rather in the centre of the earth
Inclosed be, to dig my upward way
To the far distant light, than stay me thus,
And, looking round upon my bounded state,
Say, this is all. No; lower it as it may,
I'll to the bold aspirings of my mind
Still steady prove, whilst that around my standard
Harness doth clatter, or a falchion gleam.

Alwy. What boot the bold aspirings of the
great,

When secret foes beneath his footsteps work
Their treach'rous mine?

Ethw. Ay, thou before hast hinted of such
foes.

Alwy. Fear for your safety, king, may make
me err :

But these combined chiefs, it is full plain,
Under the mask of zeal for public good,
Do court with many wiles your people's hearts;
Breathing into their ears the praise of peace,
Yea, and of peaceful kings. The thrall'd Edward,
Whose prison-tower stands distant from this castle
But scarce a league——

Ethw. (starting.) Is it so near us?

Alwy. It is, my Lord.

Nor is he so forgotten in the land,
But that he still serves their dark purpose well.
An easy gentle prince—so brave, yet peaceful—
With such impressions clogg'd, your soldiers fight,
And therefore 'tis that with a feeble foe
Ethwald fights doubtful battles.

Ethw. Thou art convinced of this?

Alwy. Most perfectly.

Ethw. I too have had such thoughts, and have
repress'd them.

Alwy. Did not those base petitioners for peace
Withhold their gather'd forces, till beset
On ev'ry side they saw your little army,
Already much diminish'd? then came they,
Like heaven-commission'd saviours, to your aid,
And drew unto themselves the praise of all.
This plainly speaks, your glory with disgrace
They fain would dash, to set their idol up;
For well they think, beneath the gentle Edward
To lord it proudly, and his gen'rous nature
Has won their love and pity. Ethelbert,
Now that such fair occasion offers to them,
The prisoner's escape may well effect:
He lacks not means.

Ethw. (*after a thoughtful pause.*)

Didst thou not say, that castle's foggy air,
And walls with dampness coated, to young blood
Are hostile and creative of disease?
In close confinement he has been full long;
Is there no change upon him?

Alwy. Some hardy natures will resist all change.

(A long pause, in which Ethwald seems thoughtful and disturbed.)

Ethw. (abruptly.)

Once in the roving fantasies of night,
Methought I slew him.

Alwy. Dreams, as some think, oft shew us things to come.

(Another long pause, in which Ethwald seems greatly disturbed, and stands fixed to one spot, till catching Alwy's eye fastened stedfastly upon his, he turns from him abruptly, and walks to the bottom of the stage with hasty strides. Going afterwards to the door, he turns suddenly round to Alwy just as he is about to go out.)

Ethw. What Thane was he, who, in a cavern'd vault,

His next of kin so long imprison'd kept,
Whilst on his lands he lived ?

Alwy. Yes, Ruthal's Thane he was ; but dearly he

The dark contrivance rued ; fortune at last
The weary thrall reliev'd, and ruin'd him.

Ethw. (agitated.) Go where thy duty calls thee : I will in :

My head feels strangely ; I have need of rest.

[EXIT.]

Alwy. (looking after him with a malicious satisfaction.)

Ay, dark perturbed thoughts will be thy rest.
I see the busy workings of thy mind.

The gentle Edward has not long to mourn
His earthly thralldom. I have done my task,
And soon shall be secure ; for whilst he lives,
And Ethelbert, who hates my artful rise,
I live in jeopardy. [EXIT.

SCENE IV.

A small dark passage ; enter ETHWALD with a lamp in his hand ; enter at the same time, by the opposite side, a domestic Officer ; they both start back on seeing one another.

Ethw. Who art thou ?

Offi. Baldwin, my Lord. But mercy on my sight,
Your face is strangely alter'd. At this hour
Awake, and wand'ring thus.—Have you seen
aught ?

Ethw. No, nothing. Know'st thou which is
Alwy's chamber ?

I would not wake my grooms.

Offi. It is that farther door ; I'll lead you to it.
(*Pointing off the stage.*)

Ethw. No, friend, I'll go myself. Good rest
to thee. [EXEUNT.

SCENE V.

A small dark chamber, with a low couch near the front of the stage, on which ALWY is discovered asleep. Enter ETHWALD with a haggard countenance, bearing a lamp.

Ethw. He sleeps—I hear him breathe—he
soundly sleeps.

Seems not this circumstance to check my purpose,
And bid me still to pause? (*Setting down the lamp.*)

But wherefore pause?

This deed must be, or, like a scared thief

Who starts and trembles o'er his grasped store

At ev'ry breezy whisper of the night,

I now must wear this crown, which I have bought

With brave men's blood, in fields of battle shed.

Ah! would that all it cost had there been shed!

This deed must be; for, like a haggard ghost

His image haunts me wheresoe'er I move,

And will not let me rest.

His love hath been to me my bosom's sting;

His gen'rous trust hath gnaw'd me like a worm.

Oh! would a swelt'ring snake had wreath'd my
neck

When first his arms embraced me!

He is by fortune made my bane, my curse,

And, were he gentle as the breast of love,

I needs must crush him.

Prison'd or free, where'er he breathes, lives one

Whom Ethwald fears. Alas! this thing must
be,

From th' imaged form of which I still have shrunk,

And started back as from my fancy's fiend.

The dark and silent cope of night is o'er us,

When vision'd horrors, thro' perturbed sleep,

Harden to deeds of blood the dreamer's breast;

When from the nether world fell demons rise

To guide with lurid flames the murd'rer's way:

I'll wake him now; should morning dawn upon
me,

My soul again might from its purpose swerve.

(In a loud energetic voice.)

Alwy, awake! sleepest thou? sleepest thou,

Alwy?

(Alwy wakes.) Nay, rouse thyself, and be thou fully waking.

What I would say must have thy mind's full bent;
Must not be spoken to a drousy ear.

Alwy. (rising quickly.) I fully am awake; I hear, I see,

As in the noon of day.

Ethw. Nay, but thou dost not.

Thy garish eye looks wildly on the light,
Like a strange visitor.

Alwy. So do the eyes of one pent in the dark,
When sudden light breaks on them, tho' he slept not.

But why, my Lord, at this untimely hour,
Are you awake, and come to seek me here?

Ethw. Alwy, I cannot sleep: my mind is toss'd
With many warring thoughts. I am push'd on
To do the very act from which my soul
Has still held back: fate doth compel me to it.

Alwy. Being your fate, who may its power resist?

Ethw. E'en call it so, for it, in truth, must be.
Know'st thou one who would do a ruthless deed,
And do it pitifully?

Alwy. He who will do it surest does it best!
And he who surely strikes, strikes quickly too,
And therefore pitifully strikes. I know
A brawny ruffian, whose firm clenched gripe

No struggles can unlock ; whose lifted dagger,
True to its aim, gives not a second stroke !

Ethw. (*covering his face hastily.*) Oh ! must it
needs be so ?

(*Catching Alwy eagerly by the arm.*) But hark thee
well !

I will have no foul butchery done upon him.

Alwy. It shall be done, e'en to the smallest
tittle,

As you yourself shall order.

Ethw. Nay, nay ! do thou contrive the fashion
of it,

I've done enough.

Alwy. But, good my Lord ! cast it not from
you thus :

There must be warrant and authority
For such a deed, and strong protection too.

Ethw. Well, well, thou hast it all : thou hast
my word.

Alwy. Ay, but the murder'd corse must be
inspected,

That no deceit be fear'd, nor after doubts ;
Nor bold impostors rising in the North,
Protected by your treach'rous Thanes, and
plum'd,

To scare you afterwards with Edward's name.

Ethw. Have not thine eyes on bloody death
oft look'd ;

Do it thyself.

Alwy. If you, my Lord, will put this trust in
me,

Swear that when after-rumours shall arise,
As like there may, your faith will be unshaken.

Ethw. Yes ; I will truly trust thee — (*vehemently, after a short pause.*)

No, I will not !

I'll trust to no man's vision but mine own.

Is the moon dark to-night ?

Alwy. It is, an please you.

Ethw. And will be so to-morrow ?

Alwy. Yes, my Lord.

Ethw. When all is still in sleep —— I hear a noise.

Alwy. Regard it not, it is the whisp'ring winds
Along those pillar'd walls.

Ethw. It is a strange sound, tho'. Come to
my chamber,

I will not here remain : Come to my chamber,
And do not leave me till the morning break.

I am a wretched man !

[EXEUNT.]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *A gloomy vaulted apartment in an old castle, with no windows to it, and a feeble light burning in one corner. Enter EDWARD from a dark recess near the bottom of the stage, with slow pensive steps, frequently stopping as he advances, and remaining for some time in a thoughtful posture.*

Ed. Doth the bright sun from the high arch
of heaven

In all his beauteous robes of flecker'd clouds,
And ruddy vapours, and deep glowing flames,
And softly varied shades, look gloriously ?

Do the green woods dance to the wind ? the lakes
Cast up their sparkling waters to the light ?

Do the sweet hamlets in their bushy dells
Send winding up to heaven their curling smoke
On the soft morning air ?

Do the flocks bleat, and the wild creatures bound
In antic happiness ? and mazy birds

Wing the mid air in lightly skimming bands ?

Ay, all this is ; all this men do behold ;

The poorest man. Even in this lonely vault,

My dark and narrow world, oft do I hear

The crowing of the cock so near my walls,

And sadly think how small a space divides me
From all this fair creation.

From the wide spreading bounds of beauteous
nature,

I am alone shut out ; I am forgotten.

Peace, peace ! he who regards the poorest worm
Still cares for me, albeit he shends me sorely.

This hath its end. Perhaps, small as these walls,
A bound unseen divides my dreary state
From a more beauteous world ; that world of
souls,

Fear'd and desired by all : a veil unseen

Which soon shall be withdrawn. (*Casts up his
eyes to heaven, and turning, walks silently
to the bottom of the stage, then advancing
again to the front.*)

The air feels chill ; methinks it should be night.

I'll lay me down : perchance kind sleep will come,

And open to my view an inward world

Of gairish fantasies, from which nor walls,

Nor bars, nor tyrant's power, can shut me out.

(*He wraps himself in a cloak and lies down.*

*Enter a Ruffian, stealing up softly to him
as supposing him asleep. Edward, hearing
him, uncovers his face, and then starts up
immediately.*)

Ed. What art thou ?

Or man or sprite ? Thou lookest wond'rous stern,
What dost thou want ? Com'st thou to murder
me ?

Ruff. Yes, I am come to do mine office on thee ;
Thy life is wretched, and my stroke is sure.

Ed. Thou sayest true ; yet, wretched as it is,
It is my life, and I will grapple for it.

Ruff. Full vainly wilt thou strive, for thinkest thou

We enter walls like these with changeling hearts,

To leave our work undone.

Ed. We, sayest thou?

There are more of you then?

Ruff. Ay, ay, there are enow to make it sure;
But, if thou wilt be quiet, I'll do't myself.
Mine arm is strong; I'll give no second stroke;
And all escape is hopeless.

Ed. What, thinkest thou I'll calmly stretch
my neck
Until thou butch'rest me?
No, by good heaven! I'll grapple with thee still?
And die with my blood hot! (*putting himself in
a posture of defence.*)

Ruff. Well, since thou'lt have it so, thou soon
shalt see
If that my mates be lovelier than myself. [EXIT.

Ed. O that I still in some dark cell could rest,
And wait the death of nature! (*looking wildly
round upon the roof and walls of the vault.*)
Nor stone, nor club, nor beam to serve my need!
Out from the walls, ye flints, and fill my grasp!
Nought! nought! Is there not yet within this
nook

Some bar or harden'd brand that I may clutch?
(EXIT *hastily into the dark recess, and is
followed immediately by two Ruffians,
who enter by the opposite side, and cross
the stage after him.*)

SCENE II.

An Apartment adjoining to the former, with a door leading to it at the bottom of the stage. Enter ALWY with a stern anxious face, and listens at the door ; then enter, by the opposite side, ETHWALD with a very haggard countenance.

Ethw. Dost thou hear aught ?

Alwy. No, nothing.

Ethw. But thou dost :

Is it not done ?

Alwy. I hope it is, my Lord.

Ethw. Thou doubttest, then. — It is long past the hour

That should have lapp'd it. Hark ! I hear a noise.

(A noise heard within of people struggling.)

Alwy. They're dealing with him now. They struggle hard.

Ethw. *(turning away with horror, and putting his hands upon his ears.)*

Ha ! are we then so near it ? This is horrid !

(After a pause.)

Is it not done yet ? Dost thou hear them still ?

Alwy. I hear them still : they struggle harder now.

(The noise within heard more distinctly.)

Ethw. By hell's dark host, thy fiends are weak of arm,

And cannot do their task ! He will break forth,
With all the bloody work half done upon him !

(Running furiously to the door, and then shuddering, and turning away from it.)

No, no, I cannot go ! do thou go in,
And give thy strength. Let him be still'd i' the
instant. (*A noise heard within of one falling.*)

Alwy. There's no need now : did you not hear
him fall ? (*A groan heard within.*)

And that groan, too ? List, list ! The deed is
done.

(*They both retire from the door, and Ethw.
leaning his back against the wall, looks
stedfastly towards it, in silent expectation,
whilst it is seen to open slowly a little way,
then shut, then open again, without any
one appearing.*)

Ethw. What may this mean ? This pause is
horrible !

Will they or enter quickly, or forbear.

*Enter First Ruffian, with his hands and
clothes bloody, and all his hair and dress
in disorder, like one who has been strug-
gling hard. Enter soon after him Sec.
Ruffian in a similar plight.*

Alwy. (eagerly.) Ye've done it : is he dead ?

First Ruf. He is still'd now ; but with such
horrid strength

He grappled with us ! we have had fell work.

Alwy. Then let us see the body.

First Ruf. Yes, enter if it please ye.

Alwy. Be pleas'd, my Lord. (*To Ethw.*)

Ethw. Pray thee be satisfied : I cannot go.

Alwy. (to the Ruffians.) Bring ye the body
hither. [EXEUNT Ruffians.

(*A silent pause. — Re-enter Ruffians, bearing the body, and laying it down before Ethw.*)

Look here, my Lord, and be well satisfied :
It is his very face, tho' somewhat changed
With long confinement in these sickly damps,
And the convulsive throes of violent death.

Ethw. (*first shrinking from it with horror, then commanding himself, and looking upon it for some time stedfastly*)

Yes, changed indeed ! and yet I know it well.
Ah ! changed indeed ! Much he must needs
have suffer'd

In his lone prison-house. Thou bruised flower !
And hast thou struggled all so bravely too
For thy most wretched life ? Base, bloody work !
Remove it from my sight.

(*Turning hastily from it.*)

Alwy. What farther orders would you give
these men ?

Ethw. Away ! speak to me not ! thou'st made
me curs'd !

Would all the realm of Mercia I had lost,
Ere it had come to this !
Once in the battle's heat I saved his life,
And he did bless me for it.

(*Beating his forehead distractedly.*)

Alwy. Nay, good my Lord, be not so keenly
moved.

Where shall we lay the body ?

Ethw. Thou and those fiends do with it as ye
will :

It is a damned work !

[*EXIT hastily.*

Alwy. (to First Ruf.) Come thou with me.—
(to Sec. Ruf.)

We will return anon ;

Meanwhile remain thou here and watch the
corpse. [EXEUNT *Alwy and First Ruf.*

Sec. Ruf. (alone.) Watch it! I would not watch
it here alone

For all my ruffian's hire. (*Throws a coarse cloth
over the body, and exit hastily.*)

SCENE III.

*A Saxon Hall in the former Castle. Enter ELB.
and DWINA, talking earnestly as they enter.*

Elb. But didst thou truly question ev'ry groom,
And the stern keeper of that postern gate ?

Dwi. I have, but no one knew that he is absent.
'Twas dark night when the king went forth, and
Alwy

Alone was with him. This is all I know.

Elb. Thus secretly, at night ! Sexford's castle
Is not far distant. — That distracted maid —
If this be so, by the true royal blood
That fills my veins, I'll be reveng'd ! What
mean'st thou ?

(*seeing Dwina shake her head piteously.*)

Dwi. Alas ! you need not fear : far distant stand
The towers of Ethelbert ; and that poor maid
With the quiet dead has found at last her rest.

Elb. And is't not well ? Why dost thou shake
thy head,
As tho' thou told'st sad news?—Yet what avails it?
I ne'ertheless must be a humble mate,

With scarcely e'en the semblance of a queen,
And bow my head whilst Mollo's son doth say,
"Be silent, wife." — Shall I endure all this?
O Edward! gentle Ethling! thou who once
Did'st bear the title of my future lord,
Would'st thou have us'd me thus? I'll not en-
dure it.

Dwi. Yet be more patient.

Elb. Be patient, say'st thou? Go to, for I hate
thee

When thou so calmly talk'st. Tho' seemingly,
I oft before his keen commanding eye
Submissive am, think'st thou I am subdu'd?
No, by my royal race! I'll not endure it:
I will unto the Bishop with my wrongs;
Rever'd and holy men shall do me right:
And here he comes unsent for; this my hope
Calls a good omen.

Enter HEXULF.

Good and holy father,
I crave your blessing.

Hex. Thou hast it, royal daughter. Art thou
well?

Thou seem'st disorder'd.

Elb. Yes, rev'rend father, I am sorely gall'd
Beneath a heavy and ignoble yoke;
My crowned head is in subjection bow'd,
Like meanest household dame; and thinkest thou
That it becomes the daughter of a king,
The chief descendant of your royal race,
To bear all this, and say that she is well?

Hex. My daughter, your great Lord indeed
is form'd

Of soul more stern than was the gentle Edward,
On whom your maiden fancy first was taught
To dwell with sanguine hope. —

Elb. O holy Hexulf! thou hast nam'd a name
Which to my conscience gives such secret
pangs :

Oh! I have done such wrong to that sweet
youth,

My heart bleeds at the cruel thought. I would—

Yea, there is nothing that I would not do

In reparation of the wrong I've done him.

Speak, my good father, if thou aught canst say :

Edward, 'tis said, has many powerful friends

In secret still devoted to his cause,

And not far distant stands his dreary tower.

O speak to me!—Thou turn'st away thy head

Disturb'd and frowningly: hast thou no counsel

For a soul-smitten and distracted woman?

*(Laying her clasped hands earnestly on his
shoulder, as he turns from her much dis-
pleased.)*

Hex. Daughter, forbear! you are indeed dis-
tracted.

Ethwald, by right of holy bands your lord,

Is in his seat too firmly fix'd; and Edward

Is only by some restless Thanes desired,

Under the influence of that dark wizard,

That heretic, who still ensnares the young.

Be wise then, I beseech you, and in peace

Live in the meek subjection of a wife.

Elb. (stepping back from him with haughty contempt.)

And so, meek, holy man, this is your counsel,
Breath'd from the gentle spirit of your state.
I've seen the chafings of your saintly ire
Restrain'd with less concern for sober duty,
When aught pertaining to your priestly rights
Was therein touch'd.

Dwi. Hush! Ethelbert approaches with his friends:

They come, methinks, at an unwonted hour.

Hex. That artful heretic regards not times;
His spells still shew to him the hour best suits
His wicked purposes.

Dwi. Heaven save us all! methinks at his approach

The air grows chill around us, and a hue
Of strange unnat'ral paleness spreads o'er all.

Elb. (to Dwi.) Peace, fool! thy fancy still
o'ertops thy wit.

Enter SELRED, ETHELBERT, and HEREULF.

Eth. In your high presence, gracious dame,
we are

Thus early visitors, upon our way
To crave admittance to the royal chamber.
Is the king stirring yet? Forgive my boldness.

Elb. Good Ethelbert, thou dost me no offence;
And you, Lord Selred, and brave Hereulf too,
I bid good morrow to you all. The king
Is not within his chamber: unattended
Of all but Alwy, at the close of night
He did go forth, and is not yet return'd.

Sel. This much amazes me: the moon was dark,
And cold and rudely blew the northern blast.

Dwi. (*listening.*) Hark! footsteps sound along
the secret passage:

Look to yon door, for something moves the bolt.
The king alone that sacred entry treads.

Enter ETHWALD from a small secret door, followed by ALWY, and starts back upon seeing Ethelbert, &c.

Ethw. (*recovering from his confusion.*)
A good and early morrow to you all:
I little thought — you are astir by times.

Eth. The same to you, my Lord, with loving
duty.

Sel. And you too, royal brother, you are moving
At an unwonted hour. But you are pale;
A ghastly hollow look is in your eyes!
What sudden stratagem of nightly war
Has call'd you forth at such untimely season?
The night was dark and cold, the north wind blew,
And if that I can read that alter'd brow,
You come not back unscath'd.

Ethw. (*confused.*) No, I am well. — The blast
has beat against me,
And tossing boughs my tangled pathway cross'd:
In sooth I've held contention with the night.

Sel. Yea, in good sooth, thou lookest too like
one

Who has contention held with damned sprites.
Hast thou not cross'd that glen where, as'tis said,
The restless ghost of a dead murd'rer stalks?

Thou shudd'rest and art pale ! O thou hast
seen it :

Thou hast indeed the haggard face of one
Who has seen fearful things,

Ethw. Thou'rt wild and fanciful : I have seen
nothing :

I am forespent and faint ; rest will restore me.
Much good be to you all ! (*going.*)

Eth. (*preventing him.*) Nay, on your royal pa-
tience, gracious king,

We must a moment's trespass make, to plead
For one, upon whose brave but gentle soul
The night of thralldom hangs. —

Ethw. (*shrinking back.*)

I know — I know thy meaning — speak it not.
It cannot be — there was a time — 'tis past.

Sel. O say not so ; the time for blessed mercy
Is ever present. For the gentle Edward,
We'll pledge our lives, and give such hostages
As shall secure your peace.

Eth. Turn not away ;

We plead for one whose meek and gen'rous soul
Most unaspiring is, and full of truth ;
For one who lov'd you, Ethwald ; one by na-
ture

Form'd for the placid love of all his kind ;
One who did ever in your growing fame
Take most unenvious joy. Such is our thrall :
Yea, and the boon that we do crave for him
Is but the free use of his cramped limbs,
And leave to breathe, beneath the cope of
heaven,

The wholesome air ; to see the cheering sun ;
To be again reckon'd with living men.

(Kneeling and clasping his knees.)

Ethw. Let go, dark Thane ; thou rack'st me
with thy words ;

They are vain sounds : — the wind has wail'd as
thou dost,

And pled as sadly too. But that must be
What needs must be. Reckon'd with living men !
Would that indeed — O would that this could be !
The term of all is fix'd. — Good night to you —
I — I should say good morning, but this light
Glares strangely on mine eyes.

(Breaking from Eth.)

Sel. *(following him.)* My dearest brother, by
a brother's love !

Ethw. *(putting him away with great agitation.)*
My heart no kindred holds with human thing.

[EXIT quickly, in great perturbation,
followed by Alwy.]

Sel. and *Hereulf* *(looking expressively at each
other, and then at Ethelbert.)*

Good Ethelbert, what ails thee ?

Her. Thy fix'd look has a dreadful meaning
in it.

Eth. Let us begone.

Sel. No, do not yield it so. I still will plead
The gentle Edward's cause : his frowns I fear not.

Eth. Come, come ; there is no cause ;
Edward is free.

Sel. How so ? thou speak'st it with a woeful
voice.

Eth. Is not the disembodied spirit free?

Sel. Ha! think'st thou that? — No, no; it cannot be.

Her. (*stamping on the ground, and grasping his sword.*)

I'll glut my sword with the foul murd'rer's blood,
If such foul deed hath been.

Eth. Hush, hush, intemp'rate boy! Let us begone. [EXEUNT *Eth. Sel. and Her.*

El. (*to Dwi.*) Heard'st thou how they conceive it?

Dwi. Ay, mercy! and it is a fearful thought!
It glanc'd e'en o'er my mind before they spoke.

El. Thou'rt silent, rev'rend father; are thy thoughts

Of such dark hue? (*with solemn earnestness to Hex.*)

Hex. Heaven's will be done in all things!
erring man

Bows silently. Good health attend your greatness.

El. Nay, go not yet, good Hexulf: in my closet

I much desire some converse with thee. Thou,
Belike, hast misconceiv'd what I have utter'd
In unadvised passion, thinking surely
It bore some meaning 'gainst my lord the king.

Hex. No, gracious daughter, I indeed receiv'd it

As words of passion. You are mov'd, I see:
But let not this dismay you: if the king
Has done the deed suspicion fastens on him,

We o'er his mind shall hold the surer sway.
A restless penitent will docile prove
To priestly counsel : this will be our gain.
But in your closet we'll discourse of this.
Heaven's will be done in all things ! [EXEUNT.

SCENE IV.

The King's Chamber. Enter ETHWALD with a thoughtful miserable look, and stands silently muttering to himself, when ALWY enters in hast, followed by an Officer.

Alwy. Pardon, my Lord ; we bring you pressing tidings.

Ethw. (*angrily.*) Shall I ne'er rest in peace in mine own chamber ?

Ha ! would that peace were there ! — You bring me tidings ;

And from what quarter come they ?

Alwy. From Utherbald, who holds your western fortress.

Ethw. He doth not yield, I hope, unto the foe ?
It is my strongest hold, and may defy
The strength of Wessex and of Britain join'd.

Of. True, king, but famine all things will subdue.

Ethw. He has surrender'd, then : by heaven and hell

I'll have his head for this !

Alwy. No, royal Ethwald,
It is not yet so bad ; but this brave man,
Commission'd by himself, will tell you all.

Ethw. Speak, warrior: then he holds the fortress still?

Of. He does, my Lord, but much he lives in fear

He shall not hold it long, unless your highness
Will give your warrant to release the prisoners;
Those ill designing Mercians whom your wisdom
Under his guard has placed.

He bade me say the step is dangerous;
But, if it is not done, those idle mouths
Consuming much, will starve him and his men
Into compliance with the foe's demand.

What is your sov'reign will? for on the instant
I must return.

Ethw. Tell him this is no time for foolish hazard.
Let them be put to death.

Of. (*shrinking back.*) Must I return with this?
all put to death?

Ethw. Yes, I have said: did'st thou not hear
my words?

Of. I heard, in truth, but mine ears strangely
rung.

Good saints there are, my Lord, within our walls,
Close pris'ners kept, of war-bred men alone,
Of whom, I trow, there scarcely is a man
Who has not some fair stripling by his side
Sharing the father's bonds, threescore and ten;
And must they all ——

Ethw. I understand thee, fool.
Let them all die! have I not said it? Go;
Linger not here, but bear thy message quickly.
[EXIT Officer *sorrowfully*.

(*Angrily to Alwy.*) What ! thou look'st on me too, as if, forsooth,

Thou wert amaz'd at this. Perceiv'st thou not How hardly I'm beset to keep the power I have so dearly bought ? Shall this impede me ? Let infants shrink ! I have seen blood enough ; And what have I to do with mercy now ?

(*Stalking gloomily away, then returning.*)

Selred and Ethelbert, and fiery Hereulf, Are to their castles sullenly retired, With many other warlike Thaness. The storm Is gath'ring round me, but we'll brave it nobly.

Alwy. The discontented chiefs, as I'm inform'd

By faithful spies, are in the halls of Hereulf Assembled, brooding o'er their secret treason.

Ethw. Are they ? Then let us send a chosen band,

And seize them unprepared. A nightly march Will bring them near his castle. Let us then Immediate orders give ; the time is precious.

[EXEUNT.]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

An Apartment in the royal castle or chief residence of ETHWALD. DWINA and several of the Ladies serving the Queen are discovered at work ; some spinning, some winding coloured yarns for the loom, and some embroidering after a rude fashion.

Dwi. (looking over the First Lady's work.)

How speeds thy work ? The queen is now impatient ;

Thou must be diligent.

First Lad. Nine weary months have I, thou knowest well,

O'er this spread garment bent, and yet thou see'st,

The half is scarcely done. I lack assistance.

Dwi. And so thou dost, but yet in the wide realm

None can be found but such as lack the skill
For such assistance. All those mingled colours,
And mazy circles, and strange carved spots,
Look, in good sooth, as tho' the stuff were strew'd
With rich and curious things : tho' much I fear
To tell you what no easy task would prove.

Sec. Lad. There lives a dame in Kent, I have been told,

Come from some foreign land, if that indeed

She be no cunning fiend in woman's garb,
 Who, with her needle, can most cunningly
 The true and perfect semblance of real flowers,
 With stalk and leaves, as fairly fashion out
 As if upon a summer bank they grew.

First Lad. Ay, ay ! no doubt ! thou hear'st
 strange tales, I ween.

Did'st thou not tell us how, in foreign lands
 Full far from this, the nice and lazy dames
 Do set foul worms to spin their silken yarn ?

Ha, ha ! (*They all laugh.*)

Sec. Lad. (*angrily.*) I did not say so.

First Lad. Nay, nay, but thou did'st !

(*laughing.*)

Sec. Lad. Thou did'st mistake me wilfully,
 in spite,

Malicious as thou art !

Dwi. I pray you wrangle not ! when ladies
 work,

They should tell pleasant tales or sweetly sing,
 Not quarrel rudely, thus, like villains' wives.

Sing me, I pray you now, the song I love.

You know it well : let all your voices join.

Omnes. We will, good Dwina.

SONG.

*Wake a while and pleasant be,
 Gentle voice of melody.*

*Say, sweet carol, who are they
 Who cheerly greet the rising day ?*

*Little birds in leafy bower ;
Swallows twitt'ring on the tower ;
Larks upon the light air borne ;
Hunters rous'd with shrilly horn ;
The woodman whistling on his way ;
The new-wak'd child at early play,
Who barefoot prints the dewy green,
Winking to the sunny sheen ;
And the meek maid who binds her yellow hair,
And blythly doth her daily task prepare.*

*Say, sweet carol, who are they
Who welcome in the evening grey ?
The housewife trim and merry lout,
Who sit the blazing fire about ;
The sage a conning o'er his book ;
The tired wight, in rushy nook,
Who half asleep, but faintly hears
The gossip's tale hum in his ears ;
The loosen'd steed in grassy stall ;
The Thannies feasting in the hall ;
But most of all the maid of cheerful soul,
Who fills her peaceful warrior's flowing bowl.*

*Well hast thou said ! and thanks to thee,
Voice of gentle melody !*

*Dwi. (to Third Lady, who sits sad and pensive.)
What is the matter, Ella ? Thy sweet voice
Was wont to join the song.*

Ella. Ah, woe is me! within these castle walls;
Under this very tower in which we are,
There be those, Dwina, who no sounds do hear
But the chill winds that o'er their dungeons
howl;

Or the still tinkling of the water-drops
Falling from their dank roofs, in dull succession,
Like the death watch at sick men's beds. Alas!
Whilst you sing cheerly thus, I think of them.

Dwi. Ay, many a diff'rent lot of joy and grief
Within a little compass may be found.
Under one roof the woeful and the gay
Do oft abide; on the same pillow rest.
And yet, if I may rightly judge, the king
Has but small joy above his wretched thralls.
Last night I listened to his restless steps,
As oft he paced his chamber to and fro,
Right o'er my head! and I did hear him utter
Such heavy groans!

First Lady. (*with all the others gathering about
Dwina curiously.*)

Didst thou? And utter'd he no other sound?
I've heard it whisper'd, at the dead of night
He sees strange things.

All. (*speaking together.*) O tell us, Dwina!
tell us!

Dwi. Out on you all! you hear such foolish
tales!

He is himself the ghost that walks the night,
And cannot rest.

Ella. Belike he is devising in his mind
How he shall punish those poor prisoners,
Who were in Hereulf's tower'd halls so lately
Surpriz'd, and in these hollow vaults confined.

First Lady. No marvel that it should disturb
him much,

When his own brother is amongst the guilty.
There will be bloody doings soon, I trow!

Dwi. Into the hands of good and pious Hexulf
The rebels will be put, so to be punish'd
As he in holy zeal shall see it meet.

Ella. Then they will dearly suffer!

Dwi. That holy man no tortures will devise.

Ella. Yes, so perchance, no tortures of the
flesh;

But there be those that do upon the soul
The rack and pincer's work.

Is he not grandson to that vengeful chief,
Who, with the death-axe lifted o'er his head,
Kept his imprison'd foe a live-long night,
Nor, till the second cock had crow'd the morn,
Dealt him the clemency of death? Full well
He is his child I know!

Dwi. What aileth thee? art thou bewitched
also?

Lamentest thou that cursed heretics
Are put in good men's power? The sharpest
punishment
O'er-reaches not their crime.

Ella. O Dwina, Dwina! thou hast watch'd
by me

When on a sick-bed laid, and held my head,
And kindly wept to see my wasted cheek,
And lov'st thou cruelty? It cannot be!

Dwi. No, foolish maiden! mercy to such fiends
Were cruelty.

Ella. Such fiends! Alas! do not they look like
men?

Do they not to their needful brethren do
The kindly deeds of men? Yea, Ethelbert
Within his halls a houseless Thane maintain'd,
Whose substance had been spent in base attempts
To work his ruin.

Dwi. The blackest fiends of all most saintly
forms

Oft wear. Go, go! thou strangely art deluded.
I tremble for thee! get thee hence and pray,
If that the wicked pity of thy heart
May be forgiven thee.

Enter a Lady eagerly.

Come, damsels, come! along the gallery,
In slow procession holy Hexulf walks,
With saintly Woggarwolfe, a fierce chief once,
But now a cowed priest of marv'llous grace.
They bear some holy relics to the queen,
Which, near the royal couch with blessings laid,
Will to the king his wonted rest restore.
Come, meet them on their way and get a blessing.

Dwi. We will all gladly go. [EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

A royal Apartment, lighted only by the Moon thro' the high arched Windows. Enter ETHWALD, as if just risen from Bed, loose and disordered, but bearing a drawn Sword in his Hand.

Ethw. Still must this heavy closeness thus oppress me ?

Will no fresh stream of air breathe on my brow,
And ruffle for a while this stilly gloom ?
O night, when good men rest, and infants sleep !
Thou art to me no season of repose,
But a fear'd time of waking more intense,
Of life more keen, of misery more palpable.
My rest must be when the broad sun doth glare ;
When armour rings and men walk to and fro ;
Like a tir'd hound stretch'd in the busy hall,
I needs must lie ; night will not cradle me.

(looking up anxiously to the windows.)

What, looks the moon still thro' that lofty arch ?
Will't ne'er be morn ?

If that again in strength

I led mine army on the bold career

So surely shapen in my fancy's eye,

I might again have joy ; but in these towers,

Around, beneath me, hateful dungeons yawn,

In every one of which some being lives

To curse me. Ethelbert, and Selred too,

My father's son and my youth's oracle,

Ye too are found with those, who raise to heaven

The prisoner's prayer against my hated head.
I am a lofty tree of growth too great
For its thin soil, from whose wide rooted fangs
The very rocks and earth that foster'd it
Do rend and fall away. — I stand alone!
I stand alone! I thought, alas! to spread
My wide protecting boughs o'er my youth's
 friends;

But they, like pois'nous brushwood at my root,
Have chok'd my stately growth e'en more than all.

(Musing for some time gloomily.)

How marr'd and stinted hath my greatness been!
What am I now of that which long ere now
I hop'd to be? O! it doth make me mad
To think of this! By hell it shall not be!
I would cut off this arm and cast it from me
For vultures' meat, if it did let or hinder
Its nobler fellow.

Yes, they shall die! I to my fortune's height
Will rear my lofty head, and stand alone,
Fearless of storm or tempest.

*(Turns round his head upon hearing a noise,
and seeing Elburga enter at the bottom of
the stage, with a lamp in her hand, like one
risen from bed, he starts back and gazes
wildly upon her.)*

What form is that? What art thou? Speak! speak
 quickly!

If thou indeed art aught of living kind.

Elb. Why didst thou start? Dost thou not
 know me?

Ethw. No ;

Thy shadow seem'd to me a crested youth.

Elb. And with that trusty weapon in thy grasp,
Which thou, of late, e'en on thy nightly couch
Hast sheathless kept, fearest thou living man ?

Ethw. It was not living man I fear'd.

Elb. What then ?

Last night when open burst your chamber door
With the rude blast, which it is wont to do,
You gaz'd upon it with such fearful looks
Of fix'd expectancy, as one, in truth,
Looks for the ent'ring of some dreadful thing.
Have you seen aught ?

Ethw. Get to thy couch. Thinkst thou I will
be question'd ?

Elb. (*putting her hand upon his shoulder soothingly.*)

Nay, be not thus uncourtly ! thou shalt tell me.

Ethw. (*shaking her off impatiently.*)

Be not a fool ! get thee to sleep, I say !
What dost thou here ?

Elb. That which, in truth, degrades my royal
birth,

And therefore should be chid ; servilely soothing
The fretful moods of one, who, new to greatness,
Feels its unwieldly robe sit on his shoulders
Constrain'd and gallingly.

Ethw. (*going up to her sternly and grasping her by the wrist.*)

Thou paltry trapping of my regal state,
Which with its other baubles I have snatch'd,

Dar'st thou to front me thus? Thy foolish pride,
 Like the mock loftiness of mimic greatness,
 Makes us contemned in the public eye,
 And my tight rule more hateful. Get thee hence ;
 And be with hooded nuns a gorgeous saint,
 For know, thou lackest meekness for a queen.

*(Elb. seems much alarmed, but at the same
 time walks from him with great assumed
 haughtiness, and exit.)*

Ethw. (alone.) This woman racks me to the
 very pitch !

Where I should look for gentle tenderness,
 There find I heartless pride. Ah ! there was one
 Who would have sooth'd my troubles ! there was
 one

Who would have cheer'd——But wherefore think
 I now ? *(pausing thoughtfully.)*

Elburga has of late been to my will
 More pliant, oft assuming gentle looks :
 What may this mean ? under this alter'd guise
 What treach'ry lurks ? *(pausing again for some
 time.)*

And yet it should not be :
 Her greatness must upon my fortune hang,
 And this she knows full well. I've chid her
 roughly.

Some have, from habit and united interest,
 Amidst the wreck of other human ties,
 The stedfast duty of a wife retain'd,
 E'en where no early love or soft endearments

The bands have knit. Yes ; I have been too rough.

(Calling to her off the stage.)

Elburga ! dost thou hear me, gentle wife ?

And thou com'st at my bidding : this is kindly.

Enter ELBURGA, humbled.

Elb. You have been stern, my Lord, You
think belike,

That I have urged you in my zeal too far
To give those rebel chieftains up to Hexulf,
As best agreeing with the former ties
That bound you to those base ungrateful men,
And with the nature of their chiefest crime,
Foul heresy ; but, if in this I err,
Zeal for your safety urged me to offend.

Ethw. I've been too stern with thee, but heed
it not.

And in that matter thou hast urged so strongly,
But that I much mistrust his cruelty,
I would resign those miserable men
To Hexulf's vengeful arm ; for much he does
Public opinion guide, and e'en to us,
If now provok'd, might prove a dang'rous foe.

Elb. Mistrust him not ; he will by oath engage
To use no torture.

Ethw. And yet methinks, Selred might still
be saved.

A holy man might well devise the means
To save a brother.

Elb. He will think of it.

Much do the soldiers the bold courage prize,

And simple plainness of his honest mind ;
To slay him might be dangerous.

Ethw. Ha! is it so? They've praised him
much of late?

Elb. Yes, he has grown into their favour greatly.

Ethw. The changeful fools! I do remember
well

They shouted loudly o'er his paltry gift,
Because so simply giv'n, when my rich spoils
Seem'd little priz'd. I like not this. 'Twere well
He were remov'd. We will consider this.

Elb. Come to your chamber then.

Ethw. No, no! into that dark oppressive den
Of horrid thoughts I'll not return.

Elb. Not so!

I've trimm'd the smold'ring fire, and by your
couch

The holy things are laid: return and fear not.

Eth. I thank thy kindness; I, indeed, have
need

Of holy things, if that a stained soul

May kindred hold with such. [EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

*A vaulted Prison. HEREULF, SELRED, and
Three Thanes of their party, are discovered
walking gloomily and silently up and down.*

First Thane. (to the Second, who groans heavily.)

Ah! wherefore, noble partner, art thou thus?

We all are brothers, equal in misfortune;

Let us endure it nobly!

Sec. Th. Ay, so I would, but it o'ercometh me.
E'en this same night, in my far distant home
Fires blaze upon my towers, to guide my steps
Thro' woody dells which I shall pass no more.
E'en on this night I promis'd to return.

First Th. Yet bear it up, and do not dash us
thus ;
We have all pleasant homes as well as thou,
To which I fear we shall no more return.

Sel. (to Third Thane, who advances from the
bottom of the stage.)
What didst thou look at yonder? Where is Ethelbert?

Third Th. Within yon deep recess, upon his
knees ;
Just now I saw him, and I turn'd aside,
Knowing the modest nature of his worship.

Enter ETHELBERT *from the recess, slowly advancing from the bottom of the stage.*

But see, he comes, and on his noble front
A smiling calmness rests, like one whose mind
Hath high communion held with blessed souls.

Her. (to Eth.) Where hast thou been, brave
Ethelbert? Ah! now
Full well I see! thy countenance declares.
Didst thou remember us? A good man's prayers
Will from the deepest dungeon climb heaven's
height,
And bring a blessing down.

Eth. Ye all are men who with undaunted hearts

Most nobly have contended for the right :
Your recompence is sure ; ye shall be bless'd.

Sec. Th. How bless'd ? With what assurance
of the mind

Hast thou pray'd for us ? Tell us truly, Ethelbert ;
As those about to die, or those who yet
Shall for a term this earthly state retain ?
Such strong impress'd ideas oft foreshew
Th' event to follow.

Eth. Man, ever eager to foresee his doom
With such conceits his fancy fondly flatters,
And I too much have given my mind to this ;
But let us now, like soldiers on the watch,
Put our soul's armour on, alike prepared
For all a soldier's warfare brings. In heav'n
He sits, who on the inward war of souls
Looks down, as one beholds a well-fought field,
And nobly will reward the brave man's struggle.

(Raising his clasped hands fervently.)

O let him now behold what his weak creatures,
With many cares and fears of nature weak,
Firmly relying on his righteous rule,
Will suffer cheerfully ! Be ye prepared !

Her. We are prepared : what say ye, noble
colleagues ?

First Th. If that I here a bloody death must
meet,

And in some nook unblest'd, far from the tombs
Of all mine honour'd race, these bones be laid,
I do submit me to the will of heaven.

Third Th. E'en so do I in deep submission bow.

Sec. Th. If that no more within my op'ning
gates

My children and my wife shall e'er again
Greet my return, or this chill'd frame again
E'er feel the kindly warmth of home, so be it !
His blessed will be done who ruleth all !

Her. If these nerv'd arms, full in the strength
of youth,

Must rot i' the earth, and all my glorious hopes
To free this land, with which high beat this heart,
Must be cut off i' th' midst, I bow my spirit
To its Almighty Lord ; I murmur not.
Yet, O that it had been permitted me
To have contended in that noble cause !
Low must I sleep in an unnoted grave,
Whilst the oppressor of my native country
Riots in brave men's blood !

Eth. Peace, noble boy ! he will not riot long.
They shall arise, who for that noble cause,
With better fortune, not with firmer hearts
Than we to th' work have yoked, will bravely
strive.

To future heroes shall our names be known ;
And in our graves of turf we shall be bless'd.

Her. Well then, I'm satisfied : I'll smile in
death ;

Yea, proudly will I smile ! it wounds me not.

Eth. How, Selred ? thou alone art silent here :
To heaven's high will what off'ring makest thou ?

Sel. Nothing, good Ethelbert. What can a man
Little enriched with the mind's rare treasure,
And of th' unrighteous turmoil of this world

Right weary grown, to his great Maker offer ?
Yet I can die as meekly as ye will,
Albeit of his regard it is unworthy.

Eth. Give me thy hand, brave man! Well
hast thou said!

In truth thy off'ring far outprizes all ;
Rich in humility. Come, valiant friends ;
It makes my breast beat high to see you thus
For fortune's worst prepar'd with quiet minds.
I'll sit me down awhile ; come, gather round me,
And for a little space the time beguile
With the free use and interchange of thought :
Of that which no stern tyrant can controul.

(They all sit down on the ground.)

Her. (to *Eth.*) Nay, on my folded mantle do
thou sit.

Eth. I thank thee, but I feel no cold. My
children !

We do but want, methinks, a blazing fire,
To make us thus a friendly chosen circle
For converse met. Then we belike would talk
Of sprites, and magic power, and marv'llous
things,

That shorten weary hours ; now let us talk
Of things that do th' inquiring mind of man
With nobler wonder fill ; that state unseen,
With all its varied mansions of delight,
To which the virtuous go, when like a dream
Smote by the beams of op'ning day, this life
With all its shadowy forms, fades into nothing.

First Th. Ay, Ethelbert, thou'rt full of sacred
lore ;

Talk thou of this, and we will gladly hear thee.
How think'st thou we shall feel, when, like a nest-
ling

Burst from its shell, we wake to this new day ?

Eth. Why e'en, methinks, like to the very thing
To which, good Thane, thou hast compared us:
For here we are but nestlings, and I trow,
Pent up i' the dark we are. When that shall open
Which human eye hath ne'er beheld, nor mind
To human body link'd, hath e'er conceiv'd,
Grand, awful, lovely : — O ! what form of words
Will body out my thoughts ! — I'll hold my peace.

*(Covers his head with his hand, and is silent
for a moment.)*

Then like a guised band, that for a while
Has mimick'd forth a sad and gloomy tale,
We shall these worthless weeds of flesh cast off,
And be the children of our father's house.

Her. (*eagerly.*) But what say'st thou of those
who doff these weeds
To clothe themselves in flames and endless woe ?

Eth. Peace to thee ! what have we to do with
this ?

Let it be veil'd in night !

Her. Nay, nay, good Ethelbert !

I fain would know what foul oppression earns ;
And please my fancy with the after-doom
Of tyrants, such as him beneath whose fangs
Our wretched country bleeds. They shall be
cursed :

O say how deeply !

Eth. Hereulf, the spirit of him thou call'st thy
master,

Who died for guilty men, breathes not in thee.
Dost thou rejoice that aught of human kind
Shall be accursed?

Her. (*Starting up.*) If not within the fiery
gulph of woe

His doom be cast, there is no power above !

Eth. For shame, young man ! this ill beseems
thy state :

Sit down and I will tell thee of this Ethwald.

Sel. (*rising up greatly agitated.*)

O no ! I pray thee do not talk of him !

The blood of Mollo has been Mercia's curse.

Eth. Sit down ; I crave it of you both ; sit down
And wear within your breasts a manlier spirit.

(*Pointing to Her. to sit close by him.*)

Nay here, my son, and let me take thy hand.

Thus by my side, in his fair op'ning youth,

Full oft has Ethwald sat and heard me talk,

With, as I well believe, a heart inclined,

Tho' somewhat dash'd with shades of darker hue,

To truth and kindly deeds.

But from this mixed seed of good and ill

One baleful plant in dark strength rais'd its head,

O'ertopping all the rest ; which fav'ring circum-
stance

Did foster up to a growth so monstrous,

That underneath its wide and noxious shade

Died all the native plants of feeble stem.

O, I have wept for him, as I have lain

On my still midnight couch! I try'd to save him,
But ev'ry means against its end recoil'd.
Good Selred, thou rememb'rest well that night
When to the Female Druid's awful cave
I led thy brother.

Sel. I remember well.

(All the Thanes speaking at once, eagerly.)

Ay, what of that? We've heard strange tales of it?

Eth. At my request the Arch Sister there re-
ceiv'd him;

And tho' she promis'd me she would unfold
Such things as might a bold ambitious mind
Scare from its wishes, she, unweetingly,
Did but the more inflame them.

Her. Ha! what say'st thou?

Did she not shew the form of things to come
By fix'd decrees, unsubject to her will?

Eth. She shew'd him things, indeed, most won-
derful;

Whether by human arts to us unknown,
Or magic, or the aid of powerful spirits
Call'd forth, I wot not. Hark! I hear a noise.

First Th. I hear without the tread of many feet.
They pull our dungeon's bars: ha, see who come!
Wear they not ruffians' brows?

Sec. Th. And follow'd still by more: a num'rous
crew.

What is their business here?

*(Enter a band of armed men, accompanied
by Two Priests, and carrying with them
a block, an axe, and a large sheet or
curtain, &c.)*

Eth. Do not the axe and block borne by those
slaves
Tell thee their errand ? But we'll face them
bravely.

They do not come upon us unawares ;
We are prepar'd.—Let us take hands, my friends !
Let us united stand, a worthy band
Of girded trav'lers, ready to depart
Unto a land unknown, but yet undreaded.

(They all take hands, facing about, and waiting the approach of the men with a steady countenance.)

First Pr. Why look you on us thus with lowering brows ?

Can linked hands the keen-edg'd steel resist ?

Her. No, Priest, but linked hearts can bid defiance

To the barb'd lightning, if so arm'd withal
Thou didst encounter us. Quick do thine office !
Here six brave heads abide thee, who ne'er yet
Have meanly bow'd themselves to living wight.

First Pr. You are too forward, youth : less will suffice :

One of those guilty heads beneath our axe
Must fall, the rest shall live. So wills our chief.
Lots shall decide our victim : in this urn

Inclosed are your fates. *(Setting down an urn in the middle of the stage upon a small tripod or stand, whilst the chiefs instantly let go hands, and stand gazing upon one another.)*

Ha ! have I then so suddenly unlink'd you ?

(With a malicious smile.)

Put forth your hands, brave chiefs ; put forth
your hands ;

And he who draws the sable lot of death,

Full speedy be his doom !

(A long pause : the chiefs still look upon one another, none of them offering to step forward to the urn.)

What pause ye thus, indeed ? This hateful urn
Doth but one death contain, and many lives,
And shrink ye from it, brave and valiant Thanes ?
Then lots shall first be cast, who shall the first
Thrust in his hand into this pot of terrors.

Eth. (stepping forth.) No, thou rude servant
of a gentle master,

Doing disgrace to thy much honour'd garb,
This shall not be : I am the eldest chief,
And I of right should stand the foremost here.

(Putting his hand into the urn.)

What heaven appoints me, welcome !

Sel. (putting in his hand.)

I am the next : heaven send me what it lists !

First Th. (putting in his hand.)

Here also let me take. If that the race
Of noble Cormac shall be sunk in night,
How small a thing determines !

Sec. Th. (putting in his hand.)

On which shall fix my grasp ? *(hesitating)* or this ?
or this ?

No, cursed thing ! whate'er thou art, I'll have
thee.

Third Th. (*putting out his hand with perturbation, misses the narrow mouth of the urn.*)

I wist not how it is : where is its mouth ?

First Pr. Direct thy hand more steadily, good Thane,

And fear not thou wilt miss it. (*To Hereulf.*)

Now, youthful chief, one lot remains for thee.

(*Hereulf pauses for a moment, and his countenance betrays perturbation, when Ethelbert steps forth again.*)

Eth. No, this young chieftain's lot belongs to me ;

He shall not draw. (*Putting in his hand quickly and taking out the last lot.*)

Now, Priest, the lots are finish'd.

First Pr. Well, open then your fates.

(*They each open their lots, whilst Hereulf stands looking eagerly in their faces as they open them.*)

Sec. Th. (*opening his, and then holding up his hands in extacy.*)

Wife, children, home ! I am a living man !

First Th. (*having opened his.*)

I number still with those who breathe the air,
And look upon the light ! blest heaven so wills it.

Third Th. (*looking at his joyfully.*)

Fate is with me ! the race of Cormac lives !

Her. (*after looking anxiously first upon Ethelbert and then upon Selred.*)

Selred, what is thy lot ? is't not dark ?

Sel. No, Hereulf.

Her. Oh, Ethelbert! thou smilest on me! alas!
It is a dismal smile! thou art the victim!
Thou shalt not die: the lot of right is mine.
A shade of human weakness cross'd my soul,
Such as before, not in the horrid fields
Of crimson slaughter did I ever feel;
But it is past; now I can bravely die,
And I will have my right.

Eth. (*pushing him affectionately away.*)
Away, my son! It is as it should be.

Her. O if thou wilt entreat me as a man,
Nor slur me with contempt! I do beseech thee
Upon my bended knee! (*Kneeling.*) O if thou
diest,
I of all living things most wretched am!

Eth. Be temperate, my son! thou art reserv'd
For what the fervid strength of active youth
Can best perform. O take him from me, friends!

(*The Thanes take Hereulf forcibly from clinging round Ethelbert, and he then assuming a softened solemnity.*)

Now, my brave friends, we have together fought
A noble warfare; I am call'd away!
Let me in kind and true affection leave you.

Thanes. (*speaking together.*) Alas, thou art our
father and our friend!

Alas, that thou should'st meet this dismal end!

Eth. Ay, true, indeed, it is a dismal end!
To mortal feeling; yet within my breast
Blest hope and love, and heaven-ward confidence,
With human frailty so combined are,
That I do feel a wild and trembling pleasure.

Even on this awful verge, methinks I go,
 Like a chid infant, from his passing term
 Of short disgrace, back to his father's presence.
(Holding up his hands with a dignified exultation.)

I feel an awful joy! — Farewell, my friends!
 Selred, we've fought in many a field together,
 And still as brothers been; take thou, I pray,
 This token of my love. And thou, good Wolfere,
 I've ever priz'd thy worth, wear thou this ring.

(To the two other chiefs, giving them also tokens.)

And you, brave chiefs, I've ever lov'd you both.
 And now, my noble Hereulf,
 Of all the youth to whom my soul e'er knit,
 As with a parent's love, in the good cause,
 Thee have I found most fervent and most firm;
 Be thine my sword, which in my native hall,
 Hung o'er my noble father's arms, thou'lt find,
 And be it in thy hands what well thou know'st
 It would have been in mine. Farewell, my friends!
 God bless you all!

(They all crowd about him, some kissing his hands, some taking hold of his clothes, except Hereulf, who starting away from him, throws himself upon the ground in an agony of grief. Ethelbert lifts up his eyes and his hands as if he were muttering a silent blessing over them.)

First Pr. This may not be! down with those
 impious hands!

Dar'st thou, foul heretic, before the face
 Of hallow'd men, thus mutter prayers accurst?

Eth. Doth this offend you?—O it makes me feel

A spirit for this awful hour unmeet,
When I do think on you, ye hypocrites!

First Pr. Come, come! we waste our time, the
heads-man waits.

(*To Eth.*) Prepare thee for the block.

Eth. And will you in the sight of these my
friends

Your bloody task perform? Let them retire.

First Pr. Nay, nay, that may not be our pious
Hexulf

Has given his orders.

Sec. Pr. O be not so cruel!

Tho' he has ordered so, yet, ne'ertheless,
We may suspend this veil, and from their eyes
The horrid sight conceal.

First Pr. Then be it so; I grant it.

(*A large cloth or curtain is suspended upon
the points of two spears, held up by spear-
men, concealing the block and executioner,
&c. from the Thanes.*)

First Pr. (*to the men behind the curtain, after
a pause,*) Are ye ready?

Voices behind. Yes, we are ready now. (*To Eth.*)

And thou?

Eth. God be my strength! I'm ready also.

(*As the Priest is leading Ethelbert behind
the curtain, he turns about to give a last look
to his friends; and they, laying their hands
devoutly upon their breasts, bow to him*

very low. They then go behind the curtain, leaving the Thanes on the front of the stage, who stand fixed in silent and horrid expectation ; except Selred, who sits down upon the ground with his face hid between his knees, and Hereulf, who rising suddenly from the ground, looks wildly round, and seeing Ethelbert gone, throws himself down again in all the distraction of grief and despair.)

(A voice behind, after some noise and bustle of preparation has been heard.)

Now do'ff his garment, and undo his vest.

Fie on it, there! assist the prisoner.

Sec. Voice. Let some one hold his hands.

Third Voice. Do ye that office. *(A pause of some length.)*

Voice again. Heads-man, let fall thy blow, he gives the sign.

(The axe is seen lifted up above the curtain, and the sound of the stroke is heard.)

Thanes. *(shrinking involuntarily, and all speaking at once.)*

The stroke of death is given !

(The Spearmen let fall the curtain, and the body of Ethelbert is discovered upon the ground, with a cloth over it ; whilst his head is held up by the Executioner, but seen very indistinctly through the spears and pikes of the surrounding Soldiers. The Thanes start back and avert their faces.

First Pr. (coming forward.)

Rebellious Thanes, ye see a deed of justice.
Here rest ye, and another day of life
Enjoy together : at this hour to-morrow
We'll visit you, and then, by lot determin'd,
Another head must fall. So wills the king.

First Th. What words are these ?

Second Th. Do thine ears catch their sense ?

Third Th. I cannot tell thee ; mine confus'dly
sound.

First Pr. (raising his voice louder.)

To-morrow at this hour we'll visit you,
And here again, selected by the lot,
Another head must fall. Till then, farewell !
Another day of life enjoy securely :
Much happiness be with you.

*(An involuntary groan bursts from the
Thanes, and Hereulf, starting furiously
from the ground, clenching his hands in a
menacing posture as the Priests and Spear-
men, &c. retire. The scene closes. *)*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

* Should this play ever have the honour of being represented upon any stage, a scene of this kind, in which so many inferior actors would be put into situations requiring the expression of strong passion, might be a disadvantage to it ; I should, therefore, recommend having the front of the stage on which the Thanes are, during the last part of the scene, thrown into deep shade, and the light only to come across the back-ground at the bottom of the stage : this would give to the whole a greater solemnity ; and by this means no expression of countenance, but only that of gesture, would be required of them.

ACT V.

SCENE I. *An open space on the walls of the castle. Enter ALWY and HEXULF, talking as they enter with violent gesture.*

Hex. (with angry vehemence.)

Escap'd, say'st thou, with all the rebel chiefs?
Hereulf escap'd? th' arch fiend himself hath
done it,

If what thou say'st be true. — It is impossible.
Say'st thou they are escap'd?

Alwy. In very truth they are.

Hex. Then damned treachery has aided them!

Alwy. Nay, rather say, thy artful cruelty
Arm'd them with that which to the weakly frame
Lends a nerv'd giant's strength; despair. From
out

The thick and massy wall, now somewhat loose
And jagged grown with time, cemented heaps,
Which scarce two teams of oxen could have
mov'd,

They've torn, and found a passage to the moat.
What did it signify in what dire form
Death frown'd upon them, so as they had died?

Hex. Who can foresee events? As well as
thou

I would that one swift stroke had slain them all
Rather than this had been. But Ethelbert
And Selred are secur'd. Was it not Selred
Who on the second night our victim fell?

Alwy. It was, but better had it been for us
Had they been left alive: had they been still
In their own castles unmolested left.
For like a wounded serpent, who, aloft,
The surgy volumes of his mangled length
In agony the more terrific rears
Against his enemy, this maimed compact
Will from thy stroke but the more fiercely rise,
Now fiery Hereulf is their daring leader.
And what have we to look for?

Hex. Dire, bloody vengeance. — O some
damned traitor
Hath done this work! it could not else have
been!

Alwy. Well, do thou find him out then, if
thou canst,
And let thy vengeance fall where lies the sin.

Hex. Doth the king know of this?

Alwy. He doth not yet.

Hex. Then must he be inform'd without delay.

Alwy. As quickly as you please, if that you
please

To take that office on yourself, good father;
But as for me, I must right plainly say
I will not venture it: no faith! of late
The frame and temper of king Ethwald's mind
Is chang'd. He ever was in former times

Cheerful, collected, sanguine ; for all turns
Of fate prepar'd, like a fair ample lake,
Whose breast receives the azure hue of heaven,
And sparkles gaily in the breezy noon :
But now, like a swoln flood, whose course has
been

O'er rude opposing rocks and rugged shelves ;
Whose turbid waters wear the sullen shade
Of dark o'erhanging banks, and all enchas'd
Round ev'ry little pebble fiercely roars,
Boiling in foamy circles, his chaf'd spirit
Can bear th' encounter of no adverse thing
To his stern will oppos'd. I may not tell him.

Hex. Be not so fearful ! art thou not a man
Us'd to the sudden turns of great men's humours ?
Thou best can do it, Alwy. (*Soothingly.*)

Alwy. Nay, father, better will it suit your age
And rev'rend state. And he has need, I ween,
Of ghostly counsel too : night after night
He rises from his tossing sleepless couch,
Oft wildly staring round the vacant chamber,
As if his fancy peopled the dark void
With horrid shapes. The queen hath told me
this.

Come, look to it, for something must be done.

Hex. I will accompany your homeward steps,
Whilst we consider of it. [EXEUNT.

SCENE II.

A royal apartment, and a Servant discovered busily employed in lighting it up. Enter to him another Servant.

Sec. Serv. Wilt thou ne'er finish lighting these grim walls ?

Will not those lamps suffice ?

First Serv. No, by my faith, we want as many more ;

For still, thou see'st, that pillar'd corner's dark,
(*Pointing to a gloomy recess on the other side of the stage.*)

Wherein the eye of conscience-scared folks
Might fearful things espy. I am commanded
To lighten each apartment of this tower
To noon-day pitch.

Sec. Serv. Ay, Uthbert, these are fearful, bloody times !

Ethwald, God knows, has on his conscience laid
A weight of cruel deeds : the executioner
Works for him now in the grim holds of death,
Instead of armed warriors in the field ;
And now men steal abroad in twilight's gloom,
To talk of fearful things, not by the blaze
Of cheerful fires, in peaceful cottage, heap'd
With sparkling faggots from the winter store.

First Serv. Ay, thou say'st well ; it is a fearful time ;

No marvel Ethwald should not love the dark
In which his fancy shapes all fearful things.

Sec. Serv. What, dost thou think it is his fancy's shapes

He looks upon? No, no: believe me, friend,
Night and the darkness are inhabited
By those who move near neighbours to the living;
Close by their very sides, yet unperceiv'd
By all, but those whose eyes unveiled are
By heavenly power, in mercy or in wrath.
Such proofs of this I've heard. — Last night thou
know'st

The royal grooms who near their master sleep,
In the adjoining chamber much were scar'd
With fearful sounds.

First Serv. I know it not. — Who was it told it
thee?

At midnight was it? (*Eagerly.*)

Sec. Serv. Yes, come with me to Baldwick, he
will tell thee;

He heard it all: thou wilt return in time
To finish, here, thy task. We'll have a horn
Of foaming ale, and thou shalt hear it all.
Good foaming ale: ay, mercy on us all!
We live in fearful times! (*Listening.*)

First Serv. (*listening also.*) What shall I do?
I hear the king a speaking angrily,
And coming hitherward. What shall I do?
Shall I remain and face him? nay, good faith!
I'll shun the storm: he is engag'd, perchance,
Too much to notice my unfinish'd task.

[*EXEUNT hastily.*]

Enter ETHWALD, talking angrily to a noble Thane.

Ethw. Nay, nay, these are excuses, noble Edmar,

Not reasons ; all our northern troops ere now
Might well have been in readiness. 'Tis plain
Such backward sloth from disaffection springs.
Look to it well :—if with the waning moon,
He and his vassals have not join'd our standard,
I'll hold him as a traitor.

Thane. My royal Lord, be not so wroth with him,

Nor let your noble mind to dark suspicion
So quickly yield. This is the season still,
When unbraced warriors on the rushy floor
Stretch them in pleasing sloth ; list'ning to tales
Of ancient crones, or merry harpers' lays,
And batt'ning on the housewife's gusty cheer :
Spring has not yet so temper'd the chill sky
That men will change their warm and shelt'ring
 roofs
For its cold canopy.

Ethw. O foul befall their gluttony and sloth !
Fie on't ! there is no season to the brave
For war unfit. With this moon's waning light,
I will, with those who dare their king to follow,
My northern march begin.

Thane. Then, faith, my Lord,
I much suspect your army will be small :
And what advantage may you well expect
From all this haste ? E'en three weeks later, still
You will surprise the foe, but ill prepar'd

To oppose invasion. Do then, gracious king,
Listen to friendly counsel, and the while,
Within these walls where ev'ry pleasure courts
you,

Like a magnificent and royal king,
Your princely home enjoy.

Ethw. Out on it, man, thou know'st not what
thou say'st !

Home hath he none who once becomes a king !
Behind the pillar'd masses of his halls
The dagger'd traitor lurks ; his vaulted roofs
Do nightly echo to the whisper'd vows
Of those who curse him ; at his costly board
With grinning smile the damned pois'ner sits ;
Yea, e'en the void recesses of his chamber,
Void tho' they be unto all eyes but his,
Are peopled—— (*stopping short.*)

Thane. (*eagerly.*) Good my Lord ! what do
you mean ?

Ethw. In the confusion of tumultuous war,
'Midst the terrific shouts of closing foes,
And trampling steeds, and din of bick'ring arms ;
Where dying warriors groan unheard, and things
Horrid to nature are as tho' they were not,
Unwail'd, unheeded :

Where the rough chance of each contentious day
Blots out all irksome mem'ry of the past,
All fear of that to follow : where like herds
Of savage beasts, on the bleak mountain's side,
Drench'd with the rain, the weary warriors lie,
Whilst nightly tempests howling o'er their heads
Lull them to rest ; there is my home, good Thane.

Thane. No marvel, then, my Lord, if to the field

You turn your eager thoughts ! I only fear
Your royal arms will in Northumberland
Find no contention worthy of their force ;
For rumour says, the northern prince is gone
With his best troops against the Scottish king.

Ethw. If this be true, it is unto my fortune
Most fair occasion ; master of the north
I soon shall be, and on the west again
Pour like a torrent big with gather'd strength.
Who told thee this ? it breaks upon me, friend,
Like bright'ning sunbeams thwart a low'ring sky.

Thane. A northern villain brought to me the tale,
And told with circumstances of good credit.

Ethw. Run thou and find him out ; I'll wait thee here ;

I must have more assurance of this matter.
Quickly, my worthy Edmar ! [EXIT *Thane.*
(*Alone.*) If that this rumour bears a true report,

Th' opposing rocks on which my rising tide
So long has beat, before me now give way,
And thro' the breach my onward waves shall roll
To the wide limits of their destin'd reach.
Full day, altho' tempestuous it may prove,
Now breaks on me ! now come the glorious height,

And the proud front, and the full grasp of power !
Fly, gloomy thoughts, and hideous fantasies,
Back to the sprites that sent you ! England's king

Behind him casts the fears of Mercia's lord.
The north subdued, then stretching to the west
My growing strength——(*stretching out his arms
in the vehemence of action, he turns him-
self round, directly facing the gloomy re-
cess on the opposite side of the stage.*)

Ha! doth some gloomy void still yawn before me,
In fearful shade? (*Turning his eyes away hastily
from it.*)

No; I saw nothing: shall I thus be moved
With ev'ry murky nook? I'll look again. (*Steals
a fearful look to the recess, and then starting
back, turns away from it with horror.*)

O they're all there again! and ev'ry phantom
Mark'd with its grisly wounds, e'en as before.
Ho! who waits there? Hugon! I say, ho, Hugon!
Come to me! quickly come!

Enter a Groom of his chamber.

Groom. Save you, my royal Lord! What is
your pleasure?

Are you in pain? Your voice did sound, me-
thought,

With strange unnat'ral strength.

Ethw. Bring me lights here.

Groom. A hundred lamps would scarce suffice,
I ween,

To light this spacious chamber.

Ethw. Then let a thousand do it; must I still
In ev'ry shady corner of my house
See hideous——quickly go, and do my bidding.
Why star'st thou round thee thus? dost thou see
aught?

Groom. No, nothing. (*Looking round fearfully.*)

Ethw. Thou need'st not look ; 'tis nothing ;
fancy oft

Deceives the eye with strange and flitting things.

Regard it not, but quickly bring more lamps.

Groom. Nay, good my Lord, shall I remain
with you,

And call my fellow ?

Ethw. (angrily.) Do as thou art commanded.

[EXIT Groom.

This man perceives the weakness of my mind.

Am I, indeed, the warlike king of Mercia ?

(*Re-enter two Grooms with lamps, which they
place in the recess. Ethwald, not venturing
to look on it again till the lights are placed,
now turns round to it, and seems relieved.*)

Ye have done well. (*After a pause, in which he
walks several times across the stage, stopping
short, and seeing the Grooms still there.*)

Why do ye linger here ? I want ye not.

Begone.

[EXEUNT Grooms.

But that I would not to those fools

Betray the shameful secret of my mind,

I fain would call them back.

What are these horrors ?

A fearful visitation of a time

That will o'erpass ? O might I so believe it !

Edmar, methinks, ere this might be return'd :

I'll wait for him no more : I'll go myself

And meet him. (*Going towards the large arched
door by which he entered, he starts back
from it with horror.*)

Ha ! they are there again !

E'en in the very door-way do they front me !

Still foremost Ethelbert and Selred tower

With their new-sever'd necks, and fix on me

Their death-strain'd eye-balls : and behind them
frowns

The murder'd youth, and Oswal's scepter'd
ghost :

Whilst seen, as if half-fading into air,

The pale distracted maid shews her faint form.

Thrice in this very form and order seen

They have before me stood. What may it mean?

I've heard that shapes like these will to the
utterance

Of human voice give back articulate sound,

And, having so adjured been, depart.

*(Stretching out both his hands, and clenching
them resolutely.)*

I'll do it, tho' behind them hell should yawn,

With all its unveil'd horrors. *(Turning again to
the door-way with awful solemnity.)*

If ought ye be but flitting fantasies,

But empty semblance of the form ye wear ;

If aught ye be that can to human voice

Real audience give, and a real sense receive

Of that on which your fix'd and hollow eyes

So stern and fix'dly glare ; I do conjure you

Depart from me, and come again no more !

From me depart ! Full well those ghastly wounds

Have been return'd into this tortur'd breast :

O drive me not unto the horrid brink

Of dire distraction !
Speak, Ethelbert ! O speak, if voice thou hast !
Tell me what sacrifice can sooth your spirits ;
Can still the unquiet sleepers of the grave :
For this most horrid visitation is
Beyond endurance of the boldest mind,
In flesh and blood enrob'd. — It takes no heed,
But fix'dly glares upon me as before.
I speak to empty air : it can be nothing.
Is it not some delusion of the eyes ?

(Rubbing his eyes very hard, and rousing himself.)

Ah ! still the hideous semblance is before me,
Plain as at first. I cannot suffer this !

(Runs to the lamps, and taking one in each hand, rushes forward in despair to the doorway.)

They are all gone ! Before the searching light
Resolv'd to nothing !

Enter HEXULF and ALWY.

Ethw. (turning hastily upon hearing them enter behind him.)

Ha ! is it you ? Most happily you come !
Welcome you are, most welcome !

Alwy. Thanks to you, good my Lord ! but on my life

This holy bishop and myself are come,
Unwillingly, with most untoward tidings.

Ethw. Well, use not many words : what now befalls ?

Hex. The rebel Hereulf and his thrall'd mates
Have, with more strength than human hands may
own,

For that the holy church —

Ethw. Well, well, what meanest thou?
And what should follow this?

Alwy. They've broke their prison walls and
are escap'd.

Ethw. I am glad on't! be it so! In faith I'm
glad!

We have shed blood enough.

Alwy. Nay, but my Lord, unto their towers of
strength

They will return; where bruited abroad
Their piteous tale, as 'nighted travellers
To the false plainings of some water fiend,
All men will turn to them; nor can your troops
In safety now begin their northern march
With such fell foes behind them.

Ethw. (roused.) Ay, thou say'st true; it is a
damned let!

Here falls another rock to bar my way.

But I will on! Come let us instantly
Set out, and foil them ere they gather strength.

Alwy. This would be well, but that within these
walls

Some of their faithful friends are still confin'd,
Who in our absence might disturbance breed,
As but a feeble guard can now be spar'd
To hold the castle. How shall this be settled?
Shall we confine them in the stronger vaults?

Ethw. (*fiercely.*) No, no! I'll have no more imprisonments!

Let them be slain; yea all: even to a man!

This is no time for weak uncertain deeds.

Saw you not Edmar as you hither came?

Alwy. We saw him with a stranger much engaged,

By a faint lamp, near to the eastern tower.

Ethw. Then follow me, and let us find him out.

Her. We follow you, my Lord.

Ethw. (*as he is about to go out, turning hastily round to Alwy.*)

Bear thou a light.

My house is like a faintly mooned cave,

And hateful shadows cross each murky aisle.

[EXEUNT, *Alwy bearing a light.*]

SCENE III.

The evening: a wood with a view of ETHWALD'S castle seen thro' the trees. Enter HEREULF disguised like a country hind: enter to him, by another path, a Thane, disguised also.

Her. Welcome, my friend! art thou the first to join me?

This as I guess should be th' appointed time:

For o'er our heads have passed on homeward wing

Dark flights of rooks and daws and flocking birds,

Wheeling aloft with wild dissonant screams;

And from each hollow glen and river's bed

The white mist slowly steals in fleecy wreaths
Up the dark wooded banks. And yet, methinks,
The deeper shades of ev'ning come not after,
As they are wont, but day is lengthen'd out
Most strangely.

Thane. See'st thou those paly streams of shiv'-
ring light

So widely spread along the northern sky?
They to the twilight grey that brightness lend
At which thou wonderest. Look up, I pray thee!

Her. (*turning and looking up.*)

What may it mean? it is a beauteous light.

Thane. In truth I know not. Many a time
have I

On hill and heath beheld the changeful face
Of awful night; I've seen the moving stars
Shoot rapidly athwart the sombre sky.

Red fiery meteors in the welkin blaze,
And sheeted lightnings gleam, but ne'er before
Saw I a sight like this. It is, belike,
Some sign portentous of our coming fate:
Had we not better pause and con awhile
This daring scene, ere yet it be too late?

Her. No, by this brave man's sword! not for an
hour

Will I the glorious vengeful deed delay,
Tho' heaven's high dome were flaming o'er my
head

And earth beneath me shook. If it be aught
Portentous, it must come from higher powers:
For demons ride but on the lower clouds,

Or raise their whirlwinds in the nether air.
All blessed spirits still must favour those!
Who war on virtue's side : therefore, I say,
Let us march boldly to the glorious work :
It is a sign foretelling Ethwald's fall.
Now for our valiant friends; they must be near.
Ho ! 'holla, ho !

*(Enter, by different paths in the wood, the
other Chiefs, disguised, and gather round
Hereulf, he receiving them joyfully.)*

Welcome ! all welcome ! you good Thane, and you,
And ev'ry valiant soul, together leagued
In this bold enterprise. Well are we met.
So far we prosper ; and my glowing heart
Tells me our daring shall be nobly crown'd.
Now move we cheerly on our way : behold
Those frowning towers, where, ere the morning
watch,
That shall be done, for which, e'en in our graves,
Full many a gen'rous Mercian, yet unborn,
Shall bless our honour'd names.

Chiefs. (speaking all together.) We follow you,
brave Hereulf.

First Chief. Ay, with true heart, or good or ill
betide,
We'll follow you.

Her. Come on ! ere this, with fifty chosen
men,

Our trusty colleague, near the northern gate,
Attends our signal. Come, ye gen'rous few ;
Ye who have groan'd in the foul dungeon's
gloom,

Whose gen'rous bosoms have indignant heav'd
 To see free men beneath th' oppressor's yoke
 Like base-born villains press'd ! Now comes the
 hour

Of virtuous vengeance : on our side in secret
 Beats ev'ry Mercian heart : the tyrant now
 Trusts not to men : nightly within his chamber
 The watch-dog guards his couch, the only friend
 He now dare trust, but shall not guard it long.
 Follow my steps, and do the gen'rous deeds
 Of valiant freemen : heaven is on our side.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE IV.

An open space within the walls of the castle, fronting one of the gates : the stage darkened, and the sky lighted up with the aurora borealis, very bright. Enter by opposite sides Two Officers of the castle.

First Off. Ha ! is it thee, my friend ?
 Thou'st left thy post, I guess, as well as I,
 To view this awful sky. Look over head,
 Where like a mighty dome, from whose bright
 centre

Shoot forth those quiv'ring rays of vivid light,
 Moving with rapid change on every side,
 Swifter than flitting thought, the heavens appear !
 Whilst o'er the west in paler brightness gleam
 Full many a widely undulating tide
 Of silver light ; and the dark low'ring east,
 Like to a bloody mantle stretched out,

Seems to conceal behind its awful shade
 Some dread commotion of the heavenly powers,
 Soon to break forth — some grand and unknown
 thing.

Second Off. It is an awful sight! what may it
 mean?

Doth it not woes and bloody strife foretell?
 I've heard my father talk of things like this. —
 When the king's passing sickness shall be gone,
 Which has detain'd him from his purpos'd march
 Against the rebel chiefs, doubt not, my friend,
 We shall have bloody work.

First Off. Ay, but ere that, mayhap, the man
 of blood

May bleed; and Mercia from the tyrant's grasp —

Second Off. Hush, hush! thou art unwise:
 some list'ning ear —

First Off. And if there should, what danger?
 all men now

Harbour such secret thoughts; and those who
 once

His youthful valour lov'd and warlike feats,
 Now loath his cruelty. I'll tell thee something—
 (*Drawing nearer him mysteriously.*)

Second Off. (*frightened.*) Hush, hush! I will
 not hear thee! hold thy tongue!

What will't avail, when on the bloody stake
 Thy head is fix'd, that all men think as thou dost:
 And he who fix'd thy cruel doom to-day
 Shall die to-morrow?

First Off. I'm mute, my friend : and now I
plainly see
How he may lord it o'er a prostrate land,
Who trembles in his iron tower the while,
With but a surly mastiff for his friend.

Second Off. Nay, do not speak so loud. What
men are these
Who pass the gate just now ? shall we not stop
them ?

*(Enter some of the leagued Chiefs in disguise
through the gate.)*

First Off. No, do not trouble them. They are,
I guess,
Some 'nighted rustics frighten'd with the sky,
Who seek the shelter of man's habitation.
In such an awful hour men crowd together,
As gath'ring sea-fowl flock before a storm.
With such a welkin blazing o'er our heads,
Shall men each other vex ? e'en let them pass.

*(Enter a crowd of frightened Women and
Children.)*

Second Off. See what a crowd of women this
way come.
With crying children clinging to their knees,
And infants in their arms ! How now, good
matrons ?

Where do you run ?

First Wom. O do not stop us ! to Saint Alban's
shrine
We run : there will we kneel, and lift our hands,
For that his holy goodness may protect us
In this most awful hour.

Sec. Wom. On, sisters, on!
 The fiery welkin rages o'er our heads,
 And we are sinful souls : O quickly move !

[*EXEUNT Women and Children.*]

Sec. Off. I also am, alack ! a sinful soul :
 I'll follow them and pray for mercy too.

First Off. I'll to the northern wall, from whence
 the heavens
 In full expanse are seen. [*EXEUNT severally.*]

SCENE V.

*ETHWALD's apartment : he is discovered sitting
 by his couch, with his elbows resting upon his
 knees, and supporting his head between both his
 hands ; the Queen standing by him.*

Qu. Why sit you thus, my Lord ? it is not well :
 It wears your strength ; I pray you go to rest.

(*A pause, and he makes no answer.*)

These nightly watchings much retard your cure :
 Be then advis'd ! (*A pause, and he still takes no
 notice.*)

Why are you thus unwilling ?

The tower is barr'd, and all things are secure.

Ethw. How goes the hour ? is it the second
 watch ?

Qu. No : near the window now, I heard the
 guard

Exchange the word : the first is but half spent.

Ethw. And does the fearful night still lie be-
 fore me

In all its hideous length ? (*Rising up with emotion.*)

O ye successive terms of gloomy quiet !
Over my mind ye pass, like rolling waves
Of dense oppression ; whilst deep underneath
Lie all his noble powers and faculties
O'erwhelmed. If such dark shades must hence-
forth cross

My checker'd life with still returning horrors,
O let me rest in the foul reptile's hole,
And take from me the being of a man !

Qu. Too much thou givest way to racking
thought :

Take this: it is a draught by cunning skill
Compounded curiously, and strongly charm'd ;
With secret virtue fill'd — it soothes the mind,
And gives the body rest. (*Offering him a cup.*)

Ethw. Say'st thou? then in good sooth I need
it much.

I thank thee too ; thou art a careful wife.

(*Takes the cup, and as he is about to put it
to his lips, stops short and looks suspiciously
at her.*)

It has, methinks, a strange unkindly smell.
Taste it thyself: dost thou not take my meaning:
Do thou first drink of it.

Qu. I am in health, my Lord, and need it not.

Ethw. By the dread powers of darkness thou
shalt drink it !

Ay, to the very dregs !

Qu. What, would you cast on me such vile
suspicious,
And treat a royal princess like your slave ?

Ethw. And so thou art. Thou rear'st thy stately neck,

And whilst I list, thou flarest in men's eyes
A gorgeous queen ; but unto me thou art ——
I do command thee, drink it to the dregs.

Qu. (*subdued, and lifting the cup to her lips.*)
Then be convinced how wrongful are thy thoughts.

Ethw. (*preventing her.*) Forbear, I am too slightly mov'd to anger.

I should have known the being of thy state
Is all too closely with my fortune link'd.

Give me the cup. Thou say'st it soothes the mind ?

If I, indeed, could rest — (*Tastes it.*) It tastes not well :

It is a bitter drug.

Qu. Then give it me again : I'll hie to Dwina,
And get from her that which shall make it sweet.

(*She walks to the door of another apartment, but as she is about to go out, Ethwald hurries after her, and catches her by the arm.*)

Ethw. Thou shalt not go and leave me thus alone.

Qu. I'll soon return again, and all around thee
Is light as noon-day.

Ethw. Nay, nay, good wife ! it rises now before me

In the full blaze of light.

Qu. Ha ! what mean'st thou ?

Ethw. The faint and shadowy forms,
That in obscurity were wont to rise

In sad array, are with the darkness fled.
But what avails the light? for now since sickness
Has press'd upon my soul, in my lone moments,
E'en in the full light of my torch-clad walls,
A horrid spectre rises to my sight,
Close by my side, and plain and palpable,
In all good seeming and close circumstance,
As man meets man.

Qu. Mercy upon us! What form does it wear?

Ethw. My murder'd brother's form.

He stands close by my side : his ghastly head
Shakes horridly upon its sever'd neck
As if new from the heads-man's stroke ; it moves
Still as I move ; and when I look upon it,
It looks — No, no ! I can no utterance find
To tell thee how it looks on me again.

Qu. Yet, fear not now : I shall not long be absent ;

And thou may'st hear my footsteps all the while,
It is so short a space. [EXIT Queen.

Ethw. (*returning to the middle of the stage.*)

I'll fix my stedfast eyes upon the ground,
And turn to other things my tutor'd thoughts
Intently. (*After pausing for a little while, with his
clenched hands crossed upon his breast,
and his eyes fixed upon the ground.*)

It may not be : I feel upon my mind
The horrid sense that preludes still its coming.
Elburga ! ho, Elburga ! (*Putting his hand before
his eyes, and calling out with a strong voice
of fear.*)

Enter Queen in haste.

Qu. Has't come again ?

Ethw. No ; but I felt upon my pausing soul
The sure and horrid sense of its approach.
Hadst thou not quickly come, it had ere now
Been frowning by my side. The cup, the cup.
(Drinks eagerly.)

Qu. Heaven grant thee peace !
Wilt thou not send unto the holy priest,
To give thee ghostly comfort ?

Ethw. (shaking his head.) Away, away ! to thee
and to thy priests
I have, alas ! lent too much heed already.

Qu. Let not your noble spirit thus be shent !
Still bear good heart ! these charmed drugs full
soon

Will make you strong and vig'rous as before ;
And in the rough sport of your northern war,
You will forget these dreadful fantasies.

Ethw. Ay, thou speak'st wisely now : methinks
I still,

In the embattled field, 'midst circling hosts,
Could do the high deeds of a warlike king ;
And what a glorious field now opens to me !
But, oh ! this cursed bar ! this ill-timed sickness ;
It keeps me back ev'n like a bitted steed.
But it was ever thus ! What have avail'd
My crimes, and cares, and blood, and iron toil ?

Qu. What have avail'd ! art thou not king of
Mercia ?

Ethw. Ay, ay, Elburga ! 'tis enough for thee
 To tower in senseless state and be a queen ;
 But to th' expanded and aspiring soul,
 To be but still the thing it long has been
 Is misery, e'en tho' enthron'd it were
 Under the scope of high imperial state.
 O, cursed hind'rance ! blasting fiends breathe on
 me.

Putt'st thou not something in thy damned drugs
 That doth retard my cure ? I might ere this
 With cased limbs have strode the clanging field,
 And been myself again. — Hark ! some one comes.
(Listening with alarm.)

Qu. Be not disturb'd, it is your faithful groom,
 Who brings the watch-dog ; all things are secure.

Ethw. Nay, but I heard the sound of other feet.
(Running to the door, and pushing in a great bar.)
 Say, who art thou without ?

Voice without. Your groom, my Lord, who
 brings your faithful dog.

Ethw. *(to Queen.)* Didst thou not hear the
 sound of other feet ?

Qu. No, only his ; your mind is too suspicious.

Ethw. I in his countenance have mark'd of late
 That which I like not : were this dreary night
 But once o'ermaster'd, he shall watch no more.

*(Opens the door suspiciously, and enters an
 armed man, leading in a great watch-dog :
 the door is shut again hastily, and the bar is
 replaced.)*

(To the dog.) Come, rough and surly friend !
 Thou only dost remain on whom my mind

Can surely trust. I'll have more dogs so train'd.

(Looking stedfastly at the Groom.)

Thy face is pale : thou hast a haggard look :

Where hast thou been? *(seizing him by the neck.)*

Answer me quickly! Say, where hast thou been?

Gr. Looking upon the broad and fearful sky.

Qu. What sayst thou?

Gr. The heavens are all a flaming o'er our heads,

And fiery spears are shiv'ring thro' the air.

Ethw. Hast thou seen this?

Gr. Ay, by our holy saint!

Qu. It is some prodigy, dark and portentous.

Gr. A red and bloody mantle seems outstretch'd

O'er the wide welkin, and ——

Ethw. Peace, damned fool!

Tell me no more : be to thy post withdrawn.

(EXIT Groom by a small side-door, leading the dog with him.)

Ethw. *(to himself, after musing for some time.)*

Heaven warring o'er my head! there is in this
Some fearful thing betoken'd.

If that, in truth, the awful term is come,

The fearful bound'ry of my mortal reach,

O'er which I must into those regions pass

Of horror and despair, to take my place

With those who do their blood-earn'd crowns exchange

For ruddy circles of devouring fire ;

Where hopeless woe and gnashing agony

Writhe in the dens of torment ; where things be
Yet never imaged in the thoughts of man,
Dark, horrible, unknown——

I'll mantle o'er my head, and think no more.

(Covers his head with his cloak, and sinks down upon the couch.)

Qu. Nay, rather stretch you on the fleecy bed.

Ethw. Rest, if thou canst, I do not hinder thee.

Qu. Then truly I will lean my head a while.

I am o'erspent and weary. *(Leans on the couch.)*

Ethw. *(hastily uncovering his face.)*

Thou must not sleep : watch with me and besilent :

It is an awful hour ! *(A long pause, then Ethwald starting up from the couch with alarm.)*

I hear strange sounds ascend the winding stairs.

Qu. I hear them too.

Ethw. Ha ! dost thou also hear it ?

Then it is real. *(listening.)* I hear the clash of arms.

Ho, guard ! come forth.

Re-enter Groom.

Go, rouse my faithful dog :

Dark treason is upon us.

Gr. *(disappears, and then re-entering.)*

He sleeps so sound, my Lord, I cannot rouse him.

Ethw. Then, villain, I'm betray'd ! thou hast betray'd me !

But set thy brawny strength against that door,
And bar them out : if thou but seem'st to flinch,
This sword is in thy heart.

(A noise of armed men is now heard at the door, endeavouring to break it open, whilst

Ethwald and the Groom set their shoulders to it to prevent them. Enter Dwina hastily from an inner apartment, and with the Queen assists in putting their strength also to the door, as the force without increases. The door is at last broken open, and Hereulf, with the Rebel Chiefs, burst in sword in hand.

Her. (to Ethwald.)

Now, thou fell ruthless lion, that hast made
With bloody rage thy native forest waste!
The spearmen are upon thee! to the strife
Turn thy rough breast: thou canst no more
escape.

*Ethw. Quick to thy villain's work, thou wordy
coward,*

Who in the sick man's chamber seek'st the fame
Thou dar'st not in th' embattled field attain!
I am prepar'd to front thee and thy mates,
Were ye twice number'd o'er. (*Sets his back to a
pillar, and puts himself into a posture of
defence.*)

*Her. The sick man's chamber! darest thou,
indeed,*

Begrimed as thou art with blood and crimes
'Gainst man committed, human rights assume?
Thou art a hideous and envenom'd snake,
Whose wounded length, even in his noisome hole,
Men fiercely hunt, for love of human kind;
And, wert thou scotch'd to the last ring of life,
E'en that poor remnant of thy curs'd existence
Should be trod out i' th' dust.

Ethw. Come on, thou boasting fool ! give thy sword work,
And spare thy cursed tongue.

Her. Ay, surely will I !
It is the sword of noble Ethelbert ;
Its master's blood weighs down its heavy strokes ;
His unseen hand directs them.

(They fight : Ethwald defends himself furiously, but at last falls, and the Conspirators raise a loud shout.)

First Ch. Bless heaven, the work is done !

Sec. Ch. Now Mercia is revenged, and free-born men
May rest their toil'd limbs in their peaceful homes.

Third Ch. *(going nearer the body.)*
Ha ! does he groan ?

Sec. Ch. No, he dies sullenly, and to the wall
Turns his writh'd form and death-distorted visage.
(A solemn pause, whilst Ethwald, after some convulsive motions, expires.)

Her. Now hath his loaded soul gone to its place,
And ne'er a pitying voice from all his kind
Cries, " God have mercy on him ! "

Third Ch. I've vow'd to dip my weapon in his blood.

First Ch. And so have I. *(Several of them advancing with their swords towards the body, a Young Man steps forth, and stretches out his arm to keep them off.)*

Young Man. My father in the British wars
was seiz'd

A British prisoner, and with all he had
 Unto a Mercian chief by lot consign'd :
 Mine aged grandsire, lowly at his feet,
 Rent his grey hair : Ethwald, a youthful warriour,
 Receiv'd the old man's pray'r and set him free ;
 Yea, even to the last heifer of his herds
 Restor'd his wealth.

For this good deed, do not insult the fallen.
 He was not ruthless once.

(They all draw back, and retire from the body.

The Queen, who has, during the fight, &c. remained at a distance, agitated with terror and suspense, now comes forward to Herulf with the air of one who supplicates for mercy, and Dwina, following close behind her, falls upon her knees, as if to beseech him in favour of her mistress.)

Qu. If thou of good king Oswal, thine old
 master,

Aught of rememb'rance hast, ——

Her. I do remember :

And deeply grieve to think a child of his
 Has so belied her mild and gentle stock.
 Nothing hast thou to fear : in some safe place,
 In holy privacy, may'st thou repent
 The evil thou hast done : for know, proud dame,
 Thou art beneath our vengeance.
 But as for thine advisers, that dark villain,
 The artful Alwy, and that impious man,
 Who does dishonour to his sacred garb,
 Their crimes have earn'd for them a bitter meed,
 And they shall have it.

Sec Ch. Shall we not now the slumb'ring Mer-
cians rouse,
And tell our countrymen that they are free
From the oppressor's yoke ?

Her. Yes, thou say'st well: thro' all the vexed
land

Let every heart bound at the joyful tidings !
Thus from his frowning height the tyrant falls
Like a dark mountain, whose interior fires,
Raging in ceaseless tumult, have devour'd
Its own foundations. Sunk in sudden ruin
To the tremendous gulph, in the vast void
No friendly rock rears its opposing head
To stay the dreadful crash.

The joyful hinds, with grave and chasten'd joy,
Point to the traveller the hollow vale
Where once it stood, and the now-sunned cots,
Where, near its base, they and their little ones
Dwelt trembling in its deep and fearful shade.

[EXEUNT.]

THE
SECOND MARRIAGE:

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN :

SEABRIGHT.

BEAUMONT, *a worthy clergyman, who is his friend
and his brother-in-law.*

LORD ALLCREST.

SIR CRAFTY SUPPLECOAT.

PLAUSIBLE, *a schemer.*

PROWLER, *his knavish follower.*

WILLIAM BEAUMONT, *son to Beaumont.*

MORGAN, *uncle to Seabright's first wife.*

ROBERT.

Gardener, Sharp, *and* Servants, &c.

WOMEN :

Lady SARAH, *sister to Lord Allcrest.*

SOPHIA, *daughter to Seabright.*

Mrs. BEAUMONT.

PRY, *Lady Sarah's woman.*

Landlady, Servants, &c.

*Scene : Seabright's house in the country, not far
from London, and a small country Inn near it.*

THE
SECOND MARRIAGE.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A garden: the Gardener discovered at work amongst some shrubs and flowers. Enter ROBERT hastily, calling to him as he enters.*

ROBERT.

STOP, stop, Gardener! What are you about there? My mistress's rose-trees rooted out of her favourite nook thus! Get out of this spot with your cursed wheel-barrow! If there were one spark of a Christian in your heart, you would pluck the last hair off your bare scalp rather than root out these shrubs.

Gar. Softly and civilly, Master Robert; and answer me one question first. — If I intend to remain gardener in this family, and make my pot boil and my family thrive as I have done, whether will it be wiser in me, do you think, to obey your orders or my master's?

Rob. And did he order you to do this?

Gar. As sure as I hold this spade in my hand.

Rob. I should as soon have thought of tearing the turf from my mother's grave as of doing this thing. Well, well; perhaps he has forgot that she liked them.

Gar. Now I rather think he remember'd, when he gave me the orders, that another lady likes them not; and a dead woman's fancy match'd against a living woman's freak, with a middle-aged widower, hear ye me, who has just pull'd the black coat off his back, has but a sorry chance, Robert.

Rob. Ay, and he has pull'd the black coat too soon off his back. But away with it!—I'll think no more of what you say—it is impossible.

Gar. May I never handle a spade again, if she did not squint to this direct spot, with her horrid-looking grey eyes, the last time she walked thro' the garden, saying it was a mass of confusion that ought to be cleared away, and he gave me the orders for doing it the very next morning.

Rob. Who could have believed this? Who could have believed this but a few months ago, when she rambled thro' these walks, with all her white frock'd train gamboling round her?

Gar. Nay, good Robert, don't be so down o' the mouth about it: the loss of his wife, and an unlook'd-for legacy of twenty thousand pounds, may set a man's brains a working upon new plans. There is nothing very wonderful in that, man. He'll get his lady-wife and the borough together,

with a power of high relations, you know, and we shall all be fine folks by and bye.—Thou wilt become master-butler or gentleman-valet, or something of that kind, and I shall be head gardener, to be sure, with a man or two to obey my orders: we shan't be the same pains-taking folks that we have been, I warrant you, when he is a parliament man.

Rob. Thou'rt always looking after something for thine own advantage, and that puts all those foolish notions into thy noddle. No, no; he has lived too sweetly in his own quiet home, amongst the rustling of his own trees and the prattling of his own infants, to go now into the midst of all that shuffling and changing and making of speeches. He'll never become a parliament man.

Gar. Well, then, let him marry Lady Sarah for love, if he please; I'll neither make nor meddle in the matter. If she keep a good house, and give good victuals and drink to the people in it, I'll never trouble my head about it.

Rob. Out upon thee, man, with thy victuals and thy drink! Thou'rt worser than a hog. Well should I like, if it were not for the sake of better folks than thyself, to see thy greedy chaps exercised upon her feeding.

Gar. What, is she niggardly then, and so fine a lady, too?

Rob. Niggardly! she'll pull off her wide hoop, and all them there flounces that people go to court in, to search over the house for the value of a

candle's end, rather than any of the poor devils belonging to her should wrong her of a doit's worth. Thou'lt have rare feeding, truly, when she comes amongst us.

Gar. Heaven forbid it, then! No wonder thou'rt anxious she should not come here. I always wonder'd what made thee so concern'd about it.

Rob. And dost thou think, swine that thou art, I am concern'd for it upon this account? Thou deservest to be fed on husks and garbage all thy life for having such a thought. I, who was the friend, I may say the relation, of my good mistress (for thou knowest I am her foster-brother); and when I look upon her poor children playing about, I feel as tho' they were my own flesh and blood. It is not that I boast of the connection : God knows I am as humble as any body !

Gar. Ay, no doubt; and a rare good thing it is, this same humility. I know a poor ass, grazing on the common, not far off, that, to my certain knowledge, is foster-brother to a very great lord, and yet, I must say that for him, I never saw him prick up his ears or even shake his tail one bit the more for it in my life. By my certies! he must be a very meek and sober-minded ass !

(Singing and gathering up his tools, &c.)

Take this in your hand for me, man ; I'm going to another part of the garden.

(Holding out something for Robert to carry.)

Rob. *(pushing away his hand angrily.)* Take care of it yourself, fool : you would sing, tho' your father were upon the gallows.

Gar. I crave your worship's pardon! I should have whined a little, to be sure, to have been better company to you. (*Looking off the stage.*) But here comes a good man who frowns upon nobody; the worthy rector of Easterdown: I'll go and bid him welcome; for he likes to see a poor fellow hold up his head before him, and speak to him like a man.

Rob. You bid him welcome, indeed! stand out of the way: I'll bid him welcome myself. He is as good as my own——No matter what. He is married to my good mistress's sister; ay, and his own father christen'd me, too. I'm glad he is come. You go to him indeed!

Enter Mr. BEAUMONT.

O Sir! you're welcome to this sad place.

Bea. I thank you, honest Robert; how do you do?

Rob. So, so; I'm obliged to you for the favour of asking. Woe is me, Sir! but this be a sad place since you came last among us.

Bea. A sad change, indeed, my good friend, and you seem to have felt it too. You look thin and alter'd, Robert.

Rob. I ha'n't been very merry of late, and that makes a body look——(*passing his hand across his eyes.*)

Bea. (*shaking his head.*) Ay, what must thy poor master be, then, since it is even so with thee? Poor man, it grieved me to think that I could not be with him on the first shock of his distress,

but illness and business of importance made it impossible for me to leave Yorkshire. How does he do? I hope you look cheerfully before him, and do all that you can to comfort him.

Rob. Indeed I should have been very glad, in my homely way, to have done what I could to comfort him; but, I don't know how it is, he gets on main well without, Sir.

Bea. (surprised.) Does he? — I'm very glad to hear it. I love him for that, now: it is a noble exertion in him; he has a great merit in it, truly.

Rob. Humph, humph. (*a pause.*)

Bea. What were you going to say, my good Robert?

Rob. Nothing, Sir; I was only clearing my throat.

Bea. How does he sleep, Robert?

Rob. I can't say, Sir, not being present when he's a-bed, you know.

Bea. How does he eat, then? Little rest and little food must, I fear, have brought him very low.

Rob. Nay, as for the matter of his eating, I can't say but I find as good a notch made in the leg of mutton, when he dines alone, as there used to be.

Bea. Well, that's good. But I fear he is too much alone.

Rob. No, Sir; he has dined out a pretty deal of late. He does, indeed, walk up and down the shady walk by the orchard, and talk to himself, often enough.

Bea. (alarmed.) Does he? that is a sign of the deepest sorrow: I must speak to him; I must put books into his hands.

Rob. O, Sir, there's no need of that; he has a book in his hand often enough.

Bea. And what kind of books does he read?

Rob. Nay, it is always the same one.

Bea. Well, he can't do better: there is but one book in the world that can't be too often in a man's hand.

Rob. Very true, Sir; but it is not that one tho'. I thought as you do myself, and so I slyly looked over his shoulder one morning to be sure of it; but I saw nothing in it but all about the great people at court, and the great offices they hold.

Bea. You astonish me, Robert. His heavy loss I fear has bewildered his wits. Poor man! poor man! and all the sweet children too!

Rob. Yes, Sir, they — will feel —

Bea. What would you say, my friend?

Rob. Nothing, Sir. This vile neckcloth takes me so tight round the throat, an' a plague to it!

Gar. (coming forward with a broad grin.) God bless you, Sir! I be glad to see you here. How does your good lady and master William do? He is grown a fine young gentleman now, I warrant: he, he, he, he, he!

Rob. (to Gar. angrily.) Can't you ask a gentleman how he does, fool, without putting that damned grin upon your face?

Bea. Why, my friend Robert, what words are these you make use of?

Rob. True, Sir, I should not have used them: but when a body is vexed he'll be angry, and when a body is angry, good sooth! he'll e'en bolt out with the first word that comes to him, though he were a saint.

Bea. Too true, Robert; but long before a body becomes a saint, he is very seldom vexed, and still seldomer angry at any thing.

Rob. God bless you, Sir, I know very well I a'n't so good as I should be, and I wish from my heart I was better.

Bea. Give me your hand, honest Robert; you will soon be better if you wish to be so, and it is a very pleasant progress when once it is fairly begun. (*Looking off the stage.*) I think I see your master at a distance. Good day to you! good day to you, Gardener. [EXEUNT severally.]

SCENE II.

A Parlour, with a door opening into the garden.

SEABRIGHT and BEAUMONT are seen walking together in the garden. BEA. talking to SEA. as they enter.

Bea. (*continuing to talk.*) I must, indeed, confess, my dear friend, you had every thing that this world can bestow; a moderate fortune, with health to enjoy it; the decent, modest tranquillity of private life, and the blessings of domestic harmony. I must, indeed, confess you were a

happy man. (*Pauses, and looks at Sea., who says nothing.*) Your measure of good things was complete ; it was impossible to add to it ; there was no more for you to desire on this side of heaven. (*Pauses again.*)

Sea. (*answering very tardily.*) I had, indeed, many of the comforts of life.

Bea. Many of the comforts of life ! you had every thing the heart of man can desire : and, pardon me, you could afford to lose part of your felicity, dear as that part might be, and still retain enough to make life worth the cherishing. To watch over your rising family ; to mark the hopeful progress of their minds ; to foster every good disposition and discourage every bad one found there : this, my friend, is a noble, an invigorating task, most worthy of a man.

Sea. It is certainly the duty of every man to attend to the education of his children ; their fortunes in the world depend upon it.

Bea. (*looking displeased at him.*) Poo ! their fortunes in that world from which this will appear but like a nest of worms, a hole for grubs and chrysalises, that world which is our high and native home, depend upon it. (*Walking up and down disturbed, and then returning to Sea. with a self-upbraiding look.*) Forgive me, Seabright ; you know I am sometimes thus, but my spark is soon extinguished. I am glad — I ought to be glad to see you so composed. It is a noble conquest you have gained over your feelings, and what must it not have cost you ! Give me your

hand, and be not thus constrained with me : I know the weakness of human nature, and dearly do I sympathise with you.

Sea. You are very kind, my friend ; but you have travelled far, you must want refreshment ; let me order something. (*Going to the door and calling a Servant, to whom he gives orders.*)

Bea. (*aside.*) Well, there is something here I don't understand. But I am wrong, perhaps : some people can't bear to have the subject of their sorrow touched upon : I'll talk to him of other things. (*Aloud to Sea. as he returns from the door.*) Your old acquaintance, Asby of Gloucestershire, called upon me a day or two before I left home, and enquired kindly after you. He is a very rich man now ; he has purchased the great estate of Carriswood, near his native place, and is high sheriff of the county.

Sea. (*becoming suddenly animated.*) What, Asby ? my old school-fellow Asby ? that is a great rise, by my soul ! The estate of Carriswood, and high sheriff of the county ! What interest has pushed him ? what connexions has he made ? has he speculated with his money ? how has he advanced himself ?

Bea. I can't very well tell you : he has gone on, like many others, turning, and scraping, and begging ; and managing great people's matters for them, till he has become one of the most considerable men in that part of the country.

Sea. He must be a clever fellow. We used to think him stupid at school ; but we have been dev'lishly deceived.

Bea. No, you have not, for he is stupid still. His brother, the poor curate of Crofton, is a clever man.

Sea. (*contemptuously.*) The poor curate of Crofton! one of those clever men, I suppose, who sit with their shoes down o' the heel, by their own study fire, brooding o'er their own hoard of ideas, without ever being able from their parts or their learning to produce one atom's worth of good to themselves or their families. I have known many such: but let me see a man, who from narrow and unfavourable beginnings, shapes out his own way in this changing world to wealth and distinction, and, by my faith! he will be wise enough for me.

Bea. My friend, you become animated: I am happy to see you so much interested in the fortune of others; it is a blessed disposition. I have something also to tell you of your old friend Malton, which I am sure will give you pleasure.

Sea. What, he has got a fortune too, I suppose, and is standing for the county.

Bea. No; something better than that, my friend.

Sea. Ha! well, some people get on amazingly.

Bea. It is amazing, indeed, for it was altogether hopeless. You remember his only son, the poor little boy that was so lame and so sickly?

Sea. Yes, I do.

Bea. Well, from some application, which I cannot remember at present, the sinews of his leg have recovered their proper tone again, and he is growing up as healthy a comely-looking lad as you can see.

Sea. O, that is what you meant : I am glad to hear it, certainly ; a cripple in a family is not easily provided for. But pray now, let me understand this matter more perfectly.

Bea. I tell you I have forgot how they treated the leg, but —

Sea. (*impatiently.*) No, no, no ! What relations, what connexions had Asby to push him ? A man can't get on without some assistance. His family, I always understood, was low and distressed.

Bea. He had two or three ways of getting on, which I would not advise any friend of mine to follow him in ; and the worst of them all was making what is called a convenient marriage.

Sea. (*affecting to laugh.*) Ha, ha, ha ! you are severe, Beaumont. Many a respectable man has suffered interest to determine even his choice of a wife. Riches and honours must have their price paid for them.

Bea. Trash and dirt ! I would not have a disagreeable vixen to tyrannise over my family for the honours of a peerage.

Sea. Well, well, people think differently upon most subjects.

Bea. They do indeed ; and it is not every one who thinks so delicately, and has so much reason to do so, upon this subject, as we have, my dear Seabright. Our wives —

Sea. (*interrupting him hastily.*) And he comes in for the county, you say ?

Bea. No, no, Seabright ; you mistake me ; high sheriff of the county, I said. How you do interest yourself in the fortunes of this man !

Sea. And what should surprise you in this ? By heaven there is nothing so interesting to me as to trace the course of a prosperous man thro' this varied world ! First he is seen like a little stream, wearing its shallow bed through the grass ; circling and winding, and gleaning up its treasures from every twinkling rill as it passes : farther on, the brown sand fences its margin, the dark rushes thicken on its side : farther on still, the broad flags shake their green ranks, the willows bend their wide boughs o'er its course : and yonder, at last, the fair river appears, spreading its bright waves to the light !

Bea. (*staring strangely on him, then turning away some paces, and shaking his head ruefully.*) Poor man ! poor man ! his intellects are deranged : he is not in his senses.

Enter a Servant.

Sea. (*to Ser.*) Very well. (*To Bea.*) Let us go to the breakfast-room, Beaumont, and you'll find something prepared for you. (*As they are about to go out, the children appear at a distance in the garden.*)

Bea. (*looking out.*) Ha ! yonder are the children : blessings on them ! I must run and speak to them first. [*EXIT into the garden to the children.*]

Sea. (*to himself, looking contemptuously after Bea.*) Ay, go to the children ! thou art only fit

company for them ! To come here with his comfort and his condolence full eight months and a half after her death — he is a mere simpleton ! His wonderful delicacy too about interested marriages ! — he is worse than a simpleton ! And my only business now, forsooth, must be to stay at home and become schoolmaster to my own children ! He is an absolute fool. (*Turning round and seeing the Servant still standing at the door.*) Have you enquired at the village which of the inns my Lord Lubberford stops at on his way to town ?

Ser. Yes, Sir ; but they don't know.

Sea. But they must know. Go, and make farther enquiries, for I must pay my respects to his Lordship as he passes. Were the fruit and the flowers carried to Lady Sarah this morning ?

Ser. I don't know, Sir.

Sea. Run to the gardener, and put him in mind of it.

[*EXEUNT.*]

SCENE III.

A Library. Enter SEABRIGHT, who walks several times slowly across the stage, as if deeply engaged in his own mind ; then stops short with a considerable pause.

Sea. I am now upon the threshold of distinction, and with one step more I cross it. On this side lies spiritless obscurity ; on that, invigorating honour. (*Pauses.*) Member of Parliament ! there is magic in the words, and of most powerful operation. Let that man find a place elsewhere ; why should I squeeze myself and everybody round me

to make room for him? Sir, he's a Member of Parliament.—Let that fool hold his tongue there; why do we silently listen to all his prosing stuff? Sir, he's a Member of Parliament.—What! bells ringing, children huzzaing, corporation men sweating at this rate, to welcome that poor lurking creature to your town? To be sure; he's a Member of Parliament.—Ay, so it is. I too have mixed with the ignoble crowd to stare upon men thus honoured. I have only now to overstep the bounds, and be myself the very thing I gazed at. (*Pausing again.*) There is, indeed, a toll, a price of entrance that must be paid, and my heart stands back from it; but there is no other way than this, and what I would wear I must purchase. O, it is well worth its price! To be but known and named as filling such a place in society brings pleasure with it. And in the eyes of our early friends too.—Methinks I can see at this moment every curious face in my native village gathering about the letter-boy as he sets out upon his rounds, to look with grinning admiration upon my first franks. “Free, Seabright;” ha, ha, ha! (*Laughing to himself, and rubbing his hands together with great complacency.*)

Enter ROBERT.

Sea. (*turning round shortly, like one who is caught.*) What brings you here, sirrah?

Rob. You desired me to tell you, Sir, when Miss Seabright returned from her walk.

Sea. (*with his countenance changed.*) And is she so soon returned?

Rob. Yes, Sir ; and I have told her you wish to speak with her.

Sea. You have told her — I wish — I looked not for her so soon — I wish you had not —

Rob. Sir !

Sea. Begone, begone ! and say I am waiting for her. (*EXIT Rob. stealing a look of observation at his master as he goes out.*) — Ah ! here comes the hard pull ! here comes the sticking-place ! I should have prepared her for this before, but my heart would not suffer me. O that I had employed some one else to tell her ! She little thinks of this ! I hear her coming. (*Listening, while children's voices are heard without.*) What ! she is bringing the children with her ! I hear the little one prating as he goes. O God ! I cannot — I cannot !

[*EXIT, running out with much agitation.*

Enter SOPHIA, carrying a little Boy on her back, and an elder Boy and Girl taking hold of her gown.

Soph. (*to the little one.*) You have had a fine ride, and a long ride, have you not ?

Little One. Yesh, tit.

Soph. Come down then, boy, for your horse is tired.

Little One. No, tit.

Soph. No, tit ! but you must tho'. (*Setting him down.*) Stand upon your fat legs there, and tell me what I'm to have for all this trouble of carrying you. What am I to have, urchin ?

Little One. Kish.

Soph. (after kissing him affectionately.) And what am I to have for these comfits I have saved for you?

Little One. Kish.

Soph. (kissing him again.) And what am I to have for the little dog I bought for you this morning?

Little One. Kish.

Soph. What! kish again? kish for every thing? (Kissing him very tenderly.) O you little rogue! you might buy the whole world for such money as this, if every body loved you as I do. Now, children, papa is not ready to see us yet, I find; so in the mean time I'll divide the little cake I promised you. (Taking a little cake from her work-bag, and dividing it; whilst Robert, peeping in at the door, and seeing Seabright not there, ventures in, and stands for a little while looking tenderly upon Soph. and the children.)

Rob. God bless all your sweet faces!

Soph. What do you want here, good Robert?

Rob. Nothing—nothing. God bless you all, my pretty ones! (Listening.) I hear him coming. [EXIT, looking piteously upon them as he goes off.]

Soph. I hear papa coming.

Little Girl. I'll run and meet him.

Eldest Boy. Don't, Emma; he does not like to play with us now; it is troublesome to him.

Little Girl. When mama was alive he play'd with us.

Soph. Hush! my good girl.

Enter SEABRIGHT.

We have been waiting for you, papa ; Robert told us you wanted to see us all together.

Sea. Did Robert tell you so ? I wanted to see you alone, Sophia ; but since it is so, the others may remain. I have got something to say to you.

Soph. You look very grave, my dear Sir : have I offended you ?

Eldest Boy. It was I who broke the china vase, so don't be angry with her for that.

Sea. My brave boy ! it is distress, and not anger, that makes me grave.

Soph. And are you distressed, papa ? O don't be distressed ! we will do every thing that we can to please you. I know very well we can't make you so happy as when mama was alive ; but we'll be such good children ! we'll obey you, and serve you, and love you so much, if you will but play with us, and look upon us again as you used to do.

Sea. (softened.) My dear girl, I wish I could make you all happy : I wish to raise your situation in the world above the pitch of my present confined abilities : I wish — (*stops, and is much embarrassed.*)

Soph. (kissing his hand.) My dear, dear father ! you say that I am your dear girl, and I promise you, you shall find me a good one. I want no better fortune in the world, than to live with you, and be useful to you. I can overlook the household matters, and order every thing in the family as you would like to have it. I want no better for-

tune than this : I shall be a happy girl and a proud girl, too, if you will put confidence in me.

Sea. (*taking her hand tenderly.*) My sweet child ! this would be a dull and sombre life for a young girl like you : you ought now to be dressed and fashioned like other young people, and have the advantage of being introduced to the world by those who —

Soph. O no ! I don't care whether my gown be made of silk or of linen : and as for being dull, never trouble your head about that ; we shall find a way to get the better of it. Do you know, papa, — but I am almost ashamed to tell it you. —

Sea. What is it, my dear ?

Soph. I have been learning to play at backgammon : for you know mama and you used to play at it of a winter evening ; and I'll play with you, if you'll allow me.

Sea. O God ! O God ! this is too much ! (*Turns from them in great agitation, and running to the opposite side of the room, stands leaning his back against the wall, whilst Sophia and the children gather round him.*)

Soph. My dear father ! what is the matter ?

Eldest Boy. Are you not well, papa ?

Sea. I am well enough ! I am well enough ! but I have something to tell you, and I cannot tell it.

Soph. For God's sake let me know what it is !

Sea. You must know it : it is necessary that you should. I am — (*Pauses.*)

Soph. A bankrupt.

Sea. No, no, no ! I am going to be married. — (*Sophia staggers some paces back, and stands like one perfectly stupified.*) What is the matter, Sophia ? are you going to faint ?

Soph. No, I shan't faint.

Sea. Be not so overcome with it, my dear child ! it is for the good of my children I marry. (*Pauses and looks at her, but she is silent.*) You, and all children in your situation, look upon these matters with a prejudiced eye. It is my great regard for you that determines me to take this step. (*Pauses, but she is silent.*) Do you hear me ? Will you not speak to me ?

Soph. O my poor mother ! little did I think when I kissed your cold hands, that you would so soon be forgotten !

Sea. No more of this, my dear ! no more of this ! It is improper ; it is painful to me. I have not forgotten — I love — I respect — I adore her memory : but I am engaged — it is necessary — your interest is concerned in it, my dear children ; and I know, my good Sophia, you will not add to your father's distress by stubborn and undutiful behaviour.

Soph. O no, my dear Sir ! if you love and adore her memory I am satisfied. Yet, if you do, how can you — O how can you ! — I will say no more : God bless you, and give you a good wife ! (*Weeping.*) But she will never be so good as my mother : she will never love you as my mother did.

Sea. Forbear, my good girl ! I know it very

well: and I don't marry now to be beloved. But Lady Sarah is a very good woman, and will make me as happy as I can expect to be; she is sister to Lord Allcrest, you know, and is related to the first people of the country.

Soph. Good heaven, Sir! you can't mean to marry Lady Sarah: all the world knows how ill-temper'd she is.

Eldest Boy. What that lady with the cunning-looking nose, and the strange staring eye-brows? If she come into this house, I'll cast my top at her.

Soph. Hold your tongue, George! papa is not so hard-hearted as to set such a woman over us. Come, come, children! gather round, and hold up your little hands to him: he will have pity upon you. (*The children gather round, and Sophia, putting the hands of the youngest child together, and holding them up, kneels down before him.*) O Sir! have pity on them! We have nobody to plead for us, and I cannot speak.

Enter ROBERT with his face all blubbered, and throwing himself upon his knees by the children, holds up his hands most piteously.

Rob. O, Sir!

Sea. (*bursting into a violent rage.*) What, sirrah! have you been listening at the door! Go from my presence this moment!

Soph. Dear Sir! be not angry with him!

Sea. (*putting her away.*) No, no! let us have no more of this nonsense: I have listen'd too long to it already. (*Breaks from them, and EXIT.*)

Rob. I wish my head had been cut off before I had come in with my ill-timed assistance! Curse upon my stupid pate! I deserve to be hang'd for it. (*Beating his head and grasping his hair.*) O my pretty ones! I sent you to him that you might work on his heart, for I knew what he wanted to say well enough, and yet I must needs thrust in my silly snout amongst you to mar all! For a man that can read books and cast accounts, and all that, to do such a trick! I deserve to be cudgel'd!

Soph. Don't be so angry at yourself, Robert: you meant it well, and you have always been so good to us!

Rob. Good to you! I love you like my own flesh and blood, every one of you; and if any body dare to do you wrong, I'll — no matter what. (*Clenching his fist and nodding significantly.*) He may turn me off if he please; but I'll not quit the neighbourhood: I'll watch over you, my pretty ones; and hang me if any one shall hurt a hair of your heads!

Soph. I thank you, Robert: but don't tell any body: that would not be right, you know. Come, children: you shall go with me to my own room.

[*EXEUNT Sophia and children by one side, and EXIT Robert by the other, looking after them with tenderness and pity.*]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *Before the front of SEABRIGHT'S House.*

Enter PLAUSIBLE and PROWLER.

Plau. Do you wait for me in that farther walk yonder, till I come from visiting my subject.

Pro. Well, God grant he prove a good subject! we are woundily in want of one at present.

Plau. Don't lose courage, man; there is always a certain quantity of good and of bad luck put into every man's lot, and the more of the one that has past over his head, the more he may expect of the other. Seabright has a fortune to speculate with, and some turn, as I have been told, for speculation: he is just launching into a new course of life, and I have a strong presentiment that I shall succeed with him.

Pro. Now away with your presentiments! for we have never yet had any good luck that has not come pop upon our heads like a snow-ball, from the very opposite point to our expectation: but he has got an unexpected legacy lately; and I have observed that a sum coming in this way, to a man of a certain disposition, very often plays the part of a decoy-bird to draw away from him all the rest of his money: there I rest my hopes.

Plau. Why you talk as if I were going to ruin him, instead of increasing his fortune by my advice.

Pro. I have seen ruin follow every man that has been favour'd with your advice, as constantly as the hind legs follow the fore legs of a horse, and therefore I cannot help thinking there must be some connection between them. However, I don't pretend to reason, Plausible: it might only be some part of their bad luck that happened just at those times to be passing over their heads: and they have always, in the mean time, supplied you and your humble follower with money for our immediate wants.

Plau. Well, hold your tongue, do! (*Knocks at the door, which is opened by Robert.*) Is your master at home?

Rob. Yes.

Plau. Can he be spoken with?

Rob. No, Sir, he can't see you at present.

Plau. At what hour can I see him?

Rob. I don't know, Sir.

Plau. Is he so much engaged? But you seem sad, my friend: has any thing happened? You had a funeral in the house some time ago?

Rob. Yes, Sir; but it is a wedding we have got in it at this bout.

Plau. I had the honour of calling on Mr. Seabright yesterday morning, but he was not at home.

Rob. Yes, Sir ; he has been at the borough of Crockdale to be chaired, and the parish of Upperton to be married ; and he returned last night —

Pro. Bridegroom and Member of Parliament !

Rob. Keep your jokes till they are asked for.

Pro. They would be stale jokes indeed, then.

Plau. (*to Pro.*) Hold your tongue, pray. (*To Rob.*) He is engaged ?

Rob. Yes, Sir ; he is with the bride and the company, in the garden, at breakfast.

Plau. Well, I shan't disturb him at present. — Here is a crown for you : you will recollect my face again when you see it ? I'll call again very soon.

Pro. (*aside.*) Mercy upon us ! the last crown we have in the world given away on such a chance ! It shan't go though.

Rob. O yes, Sir, I'll recollect you.

[EXIT PLAUSIBLE.]

Pro. (*lingering behind.*) Don't shut the door yet. Hark you, my good Mr. John, for I know your name very well !

Rob. My name is Robert.

Pro. Yes, Robert I said.

Rob. Did you so, truly ? have not I ears in my head ?

Pro. Assuredly, Sir, and ears, let me tell you, that will hear good news soon, if you will be counselled by me.

Rob. Anan ?

Pro. Have you never a mind to put out a little

money to advantage ? a guinea or so, now, in such a way as to return to you again with fifteen or twenty of his yellow-coated brethren at his back ?

Rob. Poo ! with your nonsense ! I have sent two or three guineas out upon such fool's errands already.

Pro. And did they come back empty-handed to you ?

Rob. No, by my faith ; for they never came back at all.

Pro. O lud, lud ! there be such cheats in this world, they frighten honest folks from trying their fortune. I have got a crown of my own, just now, and with another crown put to it by any good-hearted fellow that would go halves with me in the profit, I have an opportunity of making a good round sum, at present, in a very honest way, that would almost make a man of me at once : but I'm sure I don't advise you to do it ; for prudence is a great virtue ; prudence is a very great virtue.

(Bell rings, and Robert stands hesitating.)

Rob. Hang it ! a crown is no great matter after all. There it is. *(giving him the crown whilst the bell rings again.)* How that plaguy bell rings ! When you get the money for me, you'll know where to call ?

Pro. Never fear ! when I get the money for you, I'll find my way back again, I warrant you.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

A Garden, with a Temple seen at some distance, in which are discovered Lady SARAH, SOPHIA, Mr. and Mrs. BEAUMONT, and WILLIAM BEAUMONT, as if seated after breakfast; whilst GARDENER and one or two of the SERVANTS skulk near the front of the stage, behind some bushes, looking at them.

Gar. Bride indeed! she's as unlovely a looking piece of goods as ever I look'd upon. See how she stares at every thing about her, and curls up her nose like a girkin! I'll warrant you she'll be all thro' my kitchen grounds by-and-by, to count over my cabbages.

First Ser. Hold your tongue, man: we're too long here: see, they are all breaking up now, and some of them will be here in a trice.

[EXEUNT Servants.

(The company come out from the temple, and Mr. and Mrs. Beaumont advance to the front of the stage, talking together earnestly.)

Bea. *(continuing to talk.)* Nay, my dear, you are prejudiced and severe; it did not strike me that she behaved to you with so much forbidding coldness. She has an ungracious countenance to be sure, but now and then when it relaxes, she looks as if she had some good in her.

Mrs. B. Yes, Charles, you find always some good in every one of God's creatures.

Bea. And there is some good in every one of God's creatures, if you would but look for it.

Mrs. B. I'm sure those who can find it out in her have a quicker discernment than I can pretend to. How unlucky it was that we came to the house last night, without enquiring beforehand the state of the family; I thought I should have fainted when they told me of the marriage; and when I saw that creature in my sweet sister's place!

Bea. I pitied you, my dear Susan, very much, indeed I did; but it would have looked pettish and unforgiving in us to have gone away again at that late hour; and I think we must stay with them till to-morrow. For the children's sake, we must endeavour to be on good terms with them. But here come William and Sophia.

Enter WILLIAM BEAUMONT and SOPHIA, talking as they enter.

Wil. You like the yellow-streaked carnations best?

Soph. Yes, I think they are the prettiest, though we have but very few of them.

Wil. O! then I'll make our gardener sow a whole bushel of carnation-seed when I get home, that we may have a good chance, at least, of raising some of the kind you admire. And what else can I do for you, Sophy? Shall I copy some of my friend's verses for you? or send you some landscapes for your drawing book? or — did not you say you should like to have a rocking-horse for little Tony?

Soph. Indeed you are very good, cousin.

Wil. No, no! don't say that: there is no goodness at all in doing any thing for you.

Soph. (*going up to Mrs. B. who puts her arm affectionately round her.*) My dear aunt!

Wil. Ah, mother! see how tall she has grown since we saw her last, and how dark her hair is now.

Mrs. B. (*archly.*) You like fair hair best, I believe, William.

Wil. I like fair hair! I can't endure it!

Mrs. B. (*smiling.*) Well, well, you need not be so vehement in expressing your dislike.

Bea. Here comes Lady Sarah to join us: this at least is civil, you will confess.

Lady S. (*coming forward to join them.*) You are fond, Ma'am, I perceive, of the shade, from preferring this side of the garden. (*formally to Mrs. B. who coldly bows assent.*) It is a very pleasant morning for travelling, Mr. Beaumont.

Bea. Yes, Madam, it is a very pleasant morning for travelling.

Lady S. I'm sorry, however, that you will have so much dust on your road to town.

Soph. (*to Mrs. B.*) Why, you don't go to-day, aunt? I thought you were to stay longer.

Mrs. B. No, my dear, we go this morning.

(*looking significantly to Beaumont.*)

Lady S. Would not the cool of the evening be more agreeable?

Mrs. B. No, Ma'am, the coolness of this morning has been quite enough to induce us to set out immediately.

Enter Servant.

Ser. (to Lady S.) Some poor people from the village are come to wish your Ladyship health and happiness.

Lady S. (ungraciously.) I am obliged to them.—What do they mean? Ay, ay! tell them I am obliged to them. You need not wait; that is all.

[EXIT *Ser.* whilst *Mrs. B.* smiles significantly to her husband.]

Soph. I wonder if my old friend, Huskins, be amongst them: I'll run and see. (*going to run out.*)

Lady S. Perhaps, Miss Seabright will do me the honour to consult me upon what friendships are proper for her to cultivate.

Mrs. B. (*seeing Sophia distressed.*) If your Ladyship will permit us, she shall retire with me for a little while. [EXEUNT *Mrs. B. and Sophia.*]

Wil. (*aside to his father, as they are about to follow them.*) What an ugly witch it is! must we leave Sophia with her?

[EXEUNT *Beaumont and William B., Lady Sarah looking after them suspiciously.*]

Enter SEABRIGHT.

Lady S. (*turning to him with affected sprightliness.*) So you have been upon the watch, I suppose, and will not suffer me to stroll thro' these shady walks alone: I am positively to have no time to myself.

Sea. You don't call me an intruder, I hope?

Lady S. Indeed, if you become very troublesome, I don't know what I may call you. He, he, he!

(*laughing foolishly. Seabright putting his hand up to the side of her hat, she pushes it away with pretended coyness.*) How can you be so childish? he, he, he!

Sea. (*gravely.*) Won't you let me pick a caterpillar from your ribband?

Lady S. (*looking foolish and disappointed.*) O! is that it? I am much obliged to you: but you are always so good, so tenderly attentive to me! Indeed this little hand was well bestowed upon you, Seabright: I wish it had conveyed to you a better gift when it gave away myself. (*thrusting out a great brown hand to him.*)

Sea. (*raising it to his lips with affected tenderness.*) What could it possibly convey, my dear Lady Sarah, more—(*stopping short as he is about to kiss it.*) Is that a family ring upon your finger?

Lady S. Yes, it was my mother's: why so?

Sea. The arms of the Highcastles are upon it; Lord Highcastle then is your relation?

Lady S. I am nearly related to him.

Sea. (*with his countenance brightening.*) I did not know this: by my soul, I am glad of it! He is in credit with the minister: you are on good terms with him, I hope.

Lady S. Yes, I have always taken pains to be upon terms with him.

Sea. I dare say you have; I dare say you have: you have so much prudence, and so many good qualities, my dear love! (*kissing her hand with great alacrity.*)

Lady S. O! it is all your blind partiality! (*put-*

ting her hand tenderly upon his shoulder.) Do you know, my dear Mr. Seabright, that coat becomes you very much : I wish you would always wear that colour.

Sea. I'll wear any thing you like, my dear. But, by-the-bye, my constituents at Crockdale have a manufacture of woollen in the town : I must buy two or three hundred yards of their stuff from them, I believe, lest I should have occasion to be elected again.

Lady S. (taking her hand eagerly off his shoulder.) Two or three hundred yards of stuff from them ! Why the cheapest kind they make is eighteenpence-halfpenny a yard : only consider what that will come to.

Sea. No very great sum !

Lady S. I am surprised to hear you say so. Now I should think, if you were to send the mayor and aldermen a haunch of venison now and then when it comes in your way, and the earliest information of any great public events that may occur, it would be a more delicate and pleasing attention.

Sea. Well, well, my dear Lady Sarah, don't let us fall out about it.

Lady S. I am perfectly good humoured, I assure you ; but you are so ———

Sea. Yonder is your maid coming to speak to you, I'll leave you.

Lady S. Indeed she has nothing to say : I won't suffer her to break in upon our tender conversation.

Sea. But I must go to give directions about accommodating Lord Allcrest and his friend. They will be here soon.

Lady S. Nay, there you have no occasion to give yourself any trouble : leave every thing of that kind to me : you are too profuse, and too careless, in every thing.

Sea. I may at least go to the stables, and give my groom orders to provide oats for their horses.

Lady S. I have a very good receipt in my receipt-book for feeding horses upon the refuse of a garden.

Sea. (*shaking his head, and breaking away from her.*) No, no ! that won't do. [EXIT.

Enter PRY with a busy face.

Lady S. What brings you here, Pry ? Did not you see Mr. Seabright with me ?

Pry. I protest, my Lady, I have been looking at so many things this morning, I can't tell what is before my eyes.

Lady S. You have looked over every thing then as I desired you : and I hope you have done it as if it were to satisfy your own curiosity.

Pry. To be sure, my Lady ; and I might say so with truth too, for nothing does my heart so much good as looking thro' all them there places. And, O dear, my Lady ! the chests and the wardrobes, and the larders, and the store-rooms, that I have look'd into ! but that cunning fellow, Robert, would not let me into the wine-cellar though.

Lady S. And you are sure you let them understand, it was all to please your own curiosity ?

Pry. To be sure ; and I was glad I could speak the truth too, for I never does tell a lie but when I cannot get a turn served without it. I remember, my Lady, you told me long ago that this was the best rule ; and I have always held you up, my Lady, for an ensample. Lord have mercy upon their souls, that will tell you over a pack of lies for no other purpose but to make people laugh ! And there is all your writers of books too, full of stories from one end to the other, what will become of them, poor sinners ?

Lady S. Never trouble your head about them : what have you seen ?

Pry. O dear me ! the sheets and the table-linen, and the pickles, and the sweetmeats, and the hams, and the bacon, that I have seen !

Lady S. Indeed, Pry !

Pry. But do you know, my Lady, there is a curious place in the house.

Lady S. What is it, pray ?

Pry. A closet where they keep cordials for poor people.

Lady S. (*sourly.*) Humph.

Pry. It was kept for that purpose by the late Mrs. Seabright, and this young lady, I am told, is as fond of it as her mother was.

Lady S. Humph — every body has some maggot or other.

Pry. Certainly, my Lady, but this is a very strange one though. For you must know, my Lady, I thought no harm just to taste one of the bottles myself, thinking it might be some pennyroyal-water or blackberry-wine, or such things as charitable ladies give away; but I protest it is as good liquor as any gentlewoman would choose to keep for her own use.

Lady S. I believe it has run in your head, Pry?

Pry. No, no, my Lady; whatever I may do by myself, when I have a pain in my stomach, or such like, for nobody can help afflictions when it pleases heaven to send them, I never takes more than is creditable before people. — And, O my Lady! the pans of milk, and the butter, that I have seen in the dairy! And I assure you, my Lady, the servants make good use of it: they make spare of nothing: the very kitchen-maids have cream to their tea.

Lady S. Well, well; we shall see how long this rioting will last.

Pry. And I have been in the garden and the orchard too — But stop! I hear a noise in the bushes.

Lady S. (*looking round alarmed.*) Why did you talk so loud, you gossiping fool? Come with me into the house.

[*EXEUNT Lady Sarah and Pry,*
looking round alarmed.]

Enter GARDENER, creeping from amongst the bushes, and shaking his fist, and making faces after them.

Gar. I have been in the garden and the orchard too ! hang'd jade ! we shall see who comes off winner at last. [EXIT.

SCENE III.

Enter SEABRIGHT followed by ROBERT.

Sea. (*speaking as he enters.*) And he'll call again, you say ? His name is Plausible ?

Rob. Yes, Sir ; he is a very grave, sensible looking man.

Sea. And has nobody else called ?

Rob. No, Sir.

Sea. No letters for me ?

Rob. No, Sir.

Sea. Nobody applying for franks ?

Rob. No, Sir.

Sea. (*aside.*) Stupid dolts ! (*aloud.*) So much the better. Be in the way when I call for you. (*EXIT Robert.*) Well, this is strange enough : nobody soliciting ; nobody coming to pay their court to me ; nobody asking me even for a frank : it is very strange ! (*After musing some time.*) Ha ! but there is a bad spirit in men, which makes them always unwilling at first to acknowledge the superiority of him who has been more nearly on a level with themselves. It is only when they see him firmly established, and advancing in the path of honours, that they are forced to respect

him. (*After walking across the stage proudly.*) And they shall see me advance. I am not a man to stop short at such beginnings as these, after the high connections I have made : I feel that I am born for advancing. The embarrassment of public affairs at present, offers my activity a fair field for exertion. (*A great noise and clamour heard without.*) What is that ? Who waits there ?

Enter ROBERT.

What a cursed clamour and noise is this I hear ?

Rob. Only my Lady, Sir, who has been all over the house with Mrs. Pry, and laying down some prudent regulations for the family.

Sea. And what have the servants to say to that ?

Rob. A pretty deal, Sir : they are no wise mealy mouthed about the matter ; and they're all coming to your Honour with it in a body.

(*The noise without still coming nearer.*)

Sea. Don't let the angry fools come to me ; I'll have nothing to do with it. Go, tell them so.

Rob. Very well, Sir ; I'll be sure to tell them, he, he, he !

Sea. What, sirrah ! is it a joke for you ?

Rob. I did'nt laugh, Sir.

Sea. (*very angry.*) But you did, you damn'd fool !

(*Voices without.*) I'll tell his Honour of it, that I will. His Honour is a good master, and has always kept his house like a gentleman.

Sea. Did not I tell you not to let those angry ideots come to me ? [EXIT *by the opposite side*

from the noise, in great haste, whilst Robert pushes back the crowd of servants, who are seen pressing in at the door.

Rob. Get along all of you ! his Honour won't be disturb'd. [EXEUNT ; *a great clamour heard as they retire.*

SCENE IV.

Lady SARAH's Dressing-room. Enter Lady SARAH, followed by SOPHIA, carrying a work-basket in her hand, which she sets upon a work-table, and sits down to work.

Lady S. (*sitting down by her.*) Now I hope, Miss Seabright, I may flatter myself with having more of your company this morning than you generally favour me with. If Lord Allcrest does not come at an early hour, we shall have time for a good deal of work. When a young lady is industrious, and is not always reading nonsensical books, or running up and down after children, or watering two or three foolish flower-pots on her window, she can do a great many things for herself, that enable her to appear better dressed than girls who are more expensive. (*pausing.*) You don't answer me.

Soph. Indeed, Ma'am, I had better not, for I don't know what to say.

Lady S. You are a very prudent young lady, indeed, to make that a reason for holding your tongue.

Soph. It is a reason, indeed, which elder ladies do not always attend to.

Lady S. What gown is that you have put on to-day? It makes you look like a child from the nursery. Mr. Supplecoat is to accompany Lord Allcrest, who is a very promising young man, of good expectations, and I could have wished you had dressed to more advantage. There is a young friend of mine, scarcely a year older than yourself, who is just going to be married to one of the best matches in the country; and it is of great importance to have a daughter of a large family well and early settled in life.

Soph. (looking very much surprised.) O how different! My poor mother used to say, that young women ought not to be married too early, but wait till they had sense to conduct themselves at the head of a family.

Lady S. Some of them would wait till they were pretty well wrinkled then.

Soph. It must be confessed that some, who do wait till they are pretty well wrinkled, are fain at last to marry without it. (*Voices heard without.*)

Lady S. (rising quickly.) It is my brother's voice: he is come early.

Enter SEABRIGHT, LORD ALLCREST, and SIR CRAFTY SUPPLECOAT.

Lady S. My dear brother, I am rejoiced to see you. (*Holding out her hand to Lord Allcrest, who salutes her, and then curtseying very graciously to Sir Crafty.*)

Lord A. I am happy to see you look so well, sister.

Sir C. Lady Sarah looks as a bride ought to look, fair and cheerful.

Lady S. And Mr. Supplecoat talks as a courier ought to talk : I need not say how.

Lord A. I beg pardon ; let me have the pleasure of introducing Sir Crafty Supplecoat to your Ladyship.

Lady S. Every new honour that Sir Crafty acquires must give me pleasure. And permit me to introduce to your Lordship, Mr. Seabright's — I mean my daughter, who has many good qualities to make her worthy of your esteem. (*Presenting Sophia to Lord A. and then to Sir Crafty ; who afterwards modestly shrinks back behind Lady S.*)

Sea. (*aside to Lady S. pulling her by the sleeve.*) What, is he made a baronet ?

Lady S. (*aside.*) Yes.

Sea. (*aside.*) A baronet, not a knight ?

Lady S. (*aside.*) No, no ; a baronet, certainly.

Sea. (*aloud.*) Permit me again to say how happy I am to see your Lordship in this house : I hope you and Sir Crafty will not run away from us so soon as your letter gave us reason to fear.

Lord A. You are very obliging, my good Sir ; but my time, as you may suppose, is of some little importance at present, and not altogether at my own command.

Sir C. His Lordship's time has been so long devoted to the public, that he begins to believe it has a right to it.

Lord A. (affecting humility.) Why, I have been placed, without any merit of my own, in a situation which gives my country some claims upon me : ever since the time of Gilbert, third Earl of Allcrest, the chiefs of my family have pursued one uniform line of public conduct.

Sir C. For which they have been rewarded with one uniform stream of ministerial approbation. Changes of men and of measures have never been able to interrupt the happy and mutual uniformity.

Lord A. I believe, indeed, without the imputation of vanity, I may boast of it. The imputation of pride I am not so anxious to avoid : it more naturally attaches itself to that dignified stability ; that high integri — I mean that public virt — I should say — (*Mumbling, indistinctly, to himself.*) which my family has been conspicuous for.

Sir C. Pride is a fault that great men blush not to own : it is the ennobled offspring of self-love ; though, it must be confessed, grave and pompous vanity, like a fat plebeian in a robe of office, does very often assume its name.

Lord A. Ha, ha ! Sir Crafty, you have a pleasant imagination : one can see that you sometimes read books.

Sir C. I would rather follow your example, my Lord, in the more agreeable study of men. No ; I very seldom take a book in my hand, unless it be patronised by some great name, or have the honour, as has been the case with one of our best works lately, to be dedicated to your Lordship.

Lord A. I am obliged to you, Supplecoat ; I am sure I am very happy if a name of so little importance as mine can be of any use to the learned world : we all owe learning a great deal.

Sir C. I am sure the patronage of your Lordship's name is a full recompence to learning for all the obligations you owe her.

Lord A. (*bowing graciously, and then turning to Seabright, as if modestly to interrupt the stream of his own praise.*) Mr. Seabright, I must have a conversation with you in your library, when you can bestow as much leisure upon me. Most of our elections are already decided, and the ensuing parliament bids fair to be as united and as meritorious as its predecessor. In those places where I have the honour to possess some little influence, the constitution, the government, or ministry—that is to say the same thing, you know, will find hearty and zealous supporters : I think I may depend at least on the member for Crockdale. (*Bowing.*)

Sea. I hope I shall always be found to merit the friendship and alliance I have the honour of bearing to your Lordship.

Lord A. (*drawing back coldly.*) Friendship is always the strongest tie, Mr. Seabright : indeed the only one that is now held in any consideration, or indeed ever mentioned.

Sea. (*mortified, and drawing back also.*) I am ready to attend you, my Lord, whenever you please : I shall have the honour of shewing you the way to my library.

Lord A. I am infinitely obliged to you. Will you go with us too, Sir Crafty? You have a list of the voters for Underwall in your pocket. The ladies will excuse us. [EXEUNT Lord All. Sir Crafty, and Sea. who goes out with them, and re-enters almost immediately.]

Sea. (to Lady S.) His Lordship sent me back to borrow your spectacles.

Lady S. Spectacles! I use no such thing.

Sea. He says you do.

Lady S. O yes, there is a particular kind which I sometimes look through to examine any thing very minutely.

(After receiving the spectacles and going to the door, he suddenly stops and turns back.)

Sea. But is it your brother's interest that has made Supplecoat a baronet?

Lady S. I dare say it is.

Sea. Yes, yes, I make no doubt of it.

[EXIT, hurrying away.]

Lady S. (to Soph. angrily.) What made you, child, skulk behind backs so, like a simpleton?—You can be fluent enough when there is no occasion for it, and when you ought to speak you have not a word to say for yourself. This is true nursery breeding.

Soph. Indeed, Madam, you may thank yourself for it; for after what you said to me, before they arrived, about Sir Crafty Supplecoat and marrying, I could not bear to look at him; and every time he looked at me, I felt strange and

mortified, just as if I had been set there to be looked at. He is the most disagreeable man I ever saw in my life.

Lady S. Don't be uneasy ; you have little chance, I'm afraid, of being molested by him. But I forget ; I must write to my friend, Mrs. Cudimore ; her husband is in credit now, and I have been too negligent a correspondent. [EXIT.

Soph. (*sighing deeply.*) O dear ! O dear ! O dear me ! she sleeps quietly under the green sod that I would right gladly lie down beside.

[EXIT *sorrowfully.*

SCENE V.

A small Room, with Sophia's books and music, and flower-pots, &c. set in order. Enter SOPHIA very sorrowful, leaning upon Nurse.

Soph. O my dear nurse, you are our best friend ; and so she is going to send you away from us.—What will become of the poor children now ? What will become of us all by-and-by ? And my father, too, even my father ? Oh, how it grieved me to see him courting that proud Lord, who seems ashamed to consider him as a brother-in-law ! To see even my father looked down upon—it goes to my heart.

Nurse. Let him take what he gets, an' a murrain to him ! he had no business to bring her here to torment us all, after the dear lady we have lost. But dry up your tears ; we'll be revenged upon her : there is not a creature in the house that has not swore it : we'll be revenged upon her.

Soph. What do you mean, nurse?

Nurse. I must not tell you, my dear young lady; it is not proper that you should know any thing of it: but all the servants are joined in a plot, and they'll damp her courage, I warrant ye; they'll scare her finely.

Soph. (*skipping and clapping her hands.*) O, I shall be so glad to have her well scared! And I wish they would steal that nasty dog of her's, for she is kind to no living creature but it.

Nurse. Nay, to give the devil his due, I believe she is growing fond of little Tony.

Soph. Little Tony?

Nurse. Yes, indeed: it is strange enough; but the other day as she passed through the hall, we were all looking sourly enough upon her, no doubt; when, what possessed the child I don't know, but he held out his arms to her, and smiled.

Soph. Nasty little toad! to hold out his arms to her.

Nurse. And, would you believe it, she took him in her arms, kissed him very kindly, and has taken to him wonderfully ever since.

Soph. And do you think she really loves him?

Nurse. Upon my honest word I do.

Soph. O, then, don't let them do any harm to her; don't let them take any revenge upon her; if she love Tony I would not have her hurt?

Nurse. O, but she loves none of the rest; she is as hard as a millstone to the other two. O la! here comes that fine Sir Crafty, as they call him:

I wonder what can bring him here : can he be coming after you, Miss Sophy ? (*With a significant smile.*)

Soph. Now don't say so, nurse, for you know I can't bear it.

Enter SIR CRAFTY SUPPLECOAT, advancing to Sophia with a very courteous smiling face, whilst she shrinks back, and keeps close to Nurse.

Soph. (aside.) O don't go, nurse.

Sir C. Lady Sarah has had the goodness, Miss Seabright, to send you a very willing messenger, who is happy to find any pretence in the world to present himself before you.

Nurse. (aside to Soph.) It is just as I said. (*Aloud to Sir C.*) Meaning yourself, Sir ?

Sir C. Yes ; well guessed, nurse ! you are cunning enough, I see : you have the true sagacity about you that becomes your occupation ; and I doubt not that your young lady has profited by your very instructive society. Now that you have found out the messenger, perhaps Miss Seabright herself may guess what his errand is.

(*With an affected smile.*)

Nurse. (aside to Sophia, who shrinks back still more.) Ay, it is very like courting, I assure you.

Sir C. (advancing as she recedes.) Will not Miss Seabright do me the honour to bestow one thought upon it ? I cannot doubt of her ability to guess my errand, if she will have the condescension.

Nurse. (aside to Soph.) Yes, yes, it is the very thing : I have heard many a courtship begin after this fashion.

Soph. (to Sir C., very much embarrassed and frightened.) I—I—I'm sure I don't know.

Sir C. (still advancing towards her as she recedes, with a more intolerable leer on his face.) Nay, do have the goodness to give me this proof of the skill you have acquired in this refined academy of improvement, and tell me on what errand I am come.

Soph. (becoming angry.) I'm sure I don't know, unless it be to make a fool of me, and I don't think I need to stay any longer for that purpose. (*Runs out.*)

Nurse. (running after her.) Don't run away, Miss Sophy: he is a good-looking gentleman, and very civil spoken, too. [EXIT.

Sir C. (looking after them.) Ha, ha, ha!

Enter SHARP at the side by which they have gone out.

Sharp. You are merry, Sir: I believe I can guess what amuses you.

Sir C. I dare say thou can'st, Sharp: it is easy enough to see what they have got into their foolish heads. Ha, ha, ha! does the political Lady Sarah think to put off her troublesome nursery girl upon Crafty Supplecoat? But let me encourage the mistake for a little, it will strengthen my interest with Lord Allcrest, which at present is necessary to me. Thou understand'st me, Sharp.

Sharp. Yes, yes, Sir; and you'll have little trouble in keeping it up: for the servants, thanks to Mrs. Pry's gossiping, who is in her lady's

secrets, have got it so strongly into their heads, that if you but pick up the young lady's glove when she drops it, they think you are putting a ring on her finger.

Sir C. I thank thee, Sharp; and if thou can'st at any time pick up, in thine own way, any information that may be useful to me, thou shalt not go without thy reward. And how does the young lady like her stepmother's scheme? hast thou heard them talk about that?

Sharp. Nay, they say she dislikes it very much, and is deucedly shy about it.

Sir C. (smiling conceitedly.) Poo, poo, poo! she must be allowed to have her little management as well as older people: deceit is inherent in the human mind. I came here at Lady Sarah's desire, to request that she would bring her music-book into the drawing-room, and play to us; and she took it into her head — but what brought you here to seek me? Is the horse-dealer come to look at my ponies?

Sharp. Yes, Sir.

Sir C. Then I must go to him. [EXIT Sir Crafty, whilst Sharp remains behind, musing, as if in serious thought about something.]

Enter ROBERT, in a great rage.

Rob. Aye! what damn'd tricks are you thinking of? I have overheard, at the door here, all that you and your vile master have been saying. My young lady to be made a fool of for his con-

veniency, indeed! She's a match for a better man than him any day in the year; there is not a lord of the land too good for her. But I'll be revenged upon him, vile serpent that he is! I'll be revenged upon him!

Sharp. Well, don't be so loud, my good Robert, and you will perhaps be satisfied. He has twice promised to get me a place or to raise my wages for me, and if he break his word with me a third time, — I know what. Come man, let us go and have a glass together. [EXEUNT.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *A small country inn near Seabright's house. Enter BEAUMONT, MORGAN, and WILLIAM BEAUMONT.*

Bea. (to *Mor.*) Well, my good Sir, how do you like travelling once more a little easy forenoon's journey in your native country?

Mor. Every thing in my native country is pleasant to me, or at least ought to be so; but I don't know; I return to it again like a dog to a deserted house; he begins to wag his tail at the threshold, but there is nobody to welcome him in; there is another generation grown up, that knows not me; there is nothing but young people now in the world.

Bea. But those young people will love and esteem you, and honour you. The caresses even of cheerful infancy go very kindly to an old man's heart. Come, come! you shall see the promising family your niece has left behind her, and your heart will warm to them. Seabright has, I fear, set an ungracious step-mother over their head; but she, perhaps, looks more so than she is. — Here comes our landlady.

Enter Landlady.

Good morning, Mrs. Thrifty.

Land. (to Bea.) O Sir! I be glad to see you!

Bea. I thank you, good landlady: take good care of my wife.

Land. That I will, Sir! she's in the green chamber, giving orders to her maid. And this young gentleman is your son, I suppose. (*Turning and curtesying to Will.*)

Bea. Yes, my good ma'am.

Land. Blessings on him! Ay, if he be like his father, the blessings of the widow and the helpless will rest upon him. — You are going to the 'Squire's, I suppose?

Bea. Yes, landlady; how does the family do?

Land. O lud, Sir! what an alter'd family it be! the servants a-grumbling; the lady a-scolding; the 'Squire himself going up and down like a man possess'd, as they tell me, and can't sleep in his bed o' nights for writing to dukes and lords and such like, and tormenting himself, poor man, just to be made a Sir or a Knight, or some nonsense or other of that kind: — and then all the poor children; it grieves me to see them like so many chickens that have got no dam to gather them together, tho' I'm sure that dear good young lady does all that she can for them. I sees her every morning from the room overhead, which overlooks their garden, walking with them as if she were the mother of them all, tho' I warrant you she's soon snubb'd into the house again: O, it grieves me to see them!

Will. (*eagerly.*) In the room overhead did you say? and in the morning? about this time?

Land. I don't know if just at this very time.

Will. I dare say she is. (*Going out eagerly.*)

Bea. But you wanted to read that paragraph about your friend, William, and here is the newspaper just come.

Will. (*impatiently.*) O hang it! not now: I don't care if I never read it. [EXIT *quickly.*

Bea. (*to Land.*) And he can't sleep in his bed, they say, for writing letters to great people?

Land. Yes, Sir, so they say; but there may be other reasons for a man not resting in his bed.

Bea. And what other reasons may there be?

Land. Sir, my grandfather was sexton of the parish, and would have thought nothing of digging you a grave in a dark winter evening, or ringing the church bell in the middle of the night, with never a living creature near him but his dog and his lantern, and I have myself sat up with dead corpses ere now, and I can't but say they always lay very quietly when I was with them; therefore I'm not a very likely person, you know, to give heed to foolish stories about ghosts and such like. Howsomever, the servants say that they hear strange noises since their new lady came home; and some of them swears that they have heard their late lady's footsteps walking along the hall in the middle of the night, as plainly as when she was alive.

Bea. That is strange enough, landlady.

Land. To be sure it is, Sir, but what shall we say against it? for if misers come back to the world again to look after their gold, why may not a mother come back to it again to look after her children, oppressed by a hard-hearted step-mother?

Bea. Indeed, it would be difficult in this case to gainsay it. But let us have coffee in the next room, I pray you, as soon as you can.

Land. Immediately, Sir. [EXIT Landlady.]

Bea. This is a strange untoward account that our good landlady gives us of the family. One can find out, however, that domestic comfort is no more the lot of poor Seabright — but we shall see when we go to him what state he is in.

Mor. You will see yourself then, for I shan't go to him at all.

Bea. No! don't say so, my good friend: he was an affectionate husband to your niece, and an indulgent father to her children. (*Mor. shakes his head.*) When his wife died, his old habits were broken up; he is of an aspiring disposition; a high alliance and a borough presented themselves to him, and he fell into the snare. (*Mor. still shakes his head.*) He has married a woman who is narrow-minded naturally; but that disposition has been strengthened by circumstances: she has long been left, as a single woman, to support high rank upon a very small income, and has lived much with those to whom begging and solicitations are no disgrace: differently circum-

stanced she might have been more respectable, and when differently circumstanced she may become so.

Mor. Go to him thyself, Beaumont: I am an old man; my life's bark has been long buffeted about on a stormy sea, and I have seen cruel sights. I do not look upon my fellow-men with the same gentle eye as thou dost: I cannot love them myself, but I love thee because thou dost it: so e'en take me home to thine own house! no other house will I enter; and let me have an arm-chair by thy fire-side to end my days in, where I may sit at my ease, and grumble at the whole human race.

Bea. No, no! you shall see all your relations; and love them too, and do what is right by every one of them.

Mor. Do it for me then: I can't be troubled with it. Take my fortune into your own hands, and dispose of it as you please.

Bea. No; you shall do it yourself; and the blessings of those you bestow it upon shall fall on your own head undivided and unintercepted.

Mor. I will take the simplest and shortest way of settling my fortune; I'll give it all to your son.

Bea. (*Stretching himself up with a proud smile.*) Yes, if he will have it.

Enter WILLIAM B. with great animation.

Will. I've seen her, father! I've seen her!

Bea. Who have you seen?

Will. My cousin Sophy : she is in the garden just now with all the children about her ; and they have pulled off her hat in their play, and she looks so pretty—I—I mean good-humour'd, and —

Bea. (*smiling.*) There is no harm in calling her pretty, William. — But Mr. Morgan has got something very serious to say to you : he wishes to settle his fortune upon you.

Mor. Yes, my brave William, every shilling of it.

Will. What ! and Sophia and all the little Seabrights, who are as nearly related to you, to have nothing !

Mor. It shall be all your own.

Will. (*with great vehemence.*) Hang me, then, if I take one sixpence more than my own share !

Mor. Ah ! I see how it is : I am a blasted tree from which no sapling shoots : my grey hairs are despised.

Will. O say not so, my good Sir ! (*Bending one knee to the ground, and kissing the old man's hand.*) I will bow my head as affectionately beneath your blessing as the most dutiful child. But you shall have many children to respect and love you ! and one of them—O you shall see one of them that will make your heart leap with pleasure. (*Hurrying away.*)

Bea. Where are you going in such haste ?

Will. Never mind ; I'll soon return. [EXIT.

Mor. (*to Bea. who looks significantly to him.*)

Yes, my friend, he was sent to you from Him who has given you many blessings.

Bea. But none like this. (*Fervently.*) He is a brave and upright spirit, passing with me thro' this world to a better. When he was but so high, yea, but so high, how his little heart would spurn at all injustice !

Enter MRS. BEAUMONT.

Mrs. B. Where is William ?

Bea. He is gone over the way, I believe, to fetch Sophia here.

Mrs. B. I'm glad of that : I came here only to see her, and I will never enter Seabright's door again as long as I live.

Bea. " As long as I live," my dear, is a phrase of very varied significations : it means the term of an angry woman's passion, or a fond woman's fancy, or a ——

Mrs. B. Or a good man's simplicity, Mr. Beaumont. Do you think I will ever enter the house where that woman is the mistress ; unfeeling, indelicate, uncivil ?

Bea. But she won't squander his fortune, however, and that is a good thing for the children.

Mrs. B. Poo, Mr. Beaumont ! the wickedest creature on earth has always your good word for some precious quality or other.

Bea. Well, my dear, and the wickedest creature in the world always has something about it that shews whose creature it is — that shews we were all meant for a good end ; and that there is a

seed—a springing place—a beginning for it, in every body.

Mrs. B. It is a very small speck with her, then, I'm sure, and would elude any body's search but your own.

Bea. Now, Mr. Morgan, don't think hardly of my wife's disposition, because she is angry at present: I assure you she is a very good woman, and has an excellent heart: she is in all things better than myself, tho' I'm of a more composed disposition.

Mrs. B. (softened.) My dear Beaumont! I chide you as a child, and I honour you as a man! But no more of this.—Does William tell Sophia that she is to meet her great-uncle here?

Mor. I hope he will not: I should wish to be unknown for some time, that I may observe and determine for myself, since you will make me act for myself.

Bea. Go, then, into the next room with Mrs. Beaumont: I'll wait for them here, and if he has not told her already, I'll desire him to conceal it. I hear them coming.

[EXEUNT *Mrs. B. and Morgan.*

Enter WILLIAM B. leading in SOPHIA.

Soph. But who are you taking me to see?

Will. You shall know by-and-bye.—But do stop a moment, Sophy, and pull back the hat a little from your face: you look best with it so. (*Stopping and putting her hat to rights.*) That will do. — And throw away that foolish basket out of your hands; (*taking a flower-basket from her, in*

which she seems to have been gathering rose-leaves, and throwing it away ;) and pray, now, hold up your head a little better.

Soph. But what is all this preparation for ?

(Bea. who had retired to the bottom of the stage, unobserved by them, now advances softly behind Soph. and makes a sign to William to be silent.)

Will. You are to see somebody that loves you very much, and likes to see you look well, you know ; you are to see your aunt.

Soph. But there is somebody else you told me of.

Will. Yes, there is an old connection of ours with her ; and pray now, Sophy, look pleasantly upon him ; for he is an old man, and has met with misfortunes ; he has been in foreign countries ; he has been in prisons, and has had chains on his legs.

Soph. O then, I am sure I shall look upon him kindly !

[EXEUNT Soph. and Will., followed at a distance by Beaumont.]

SCENE II.

A large room in SEABRIGHT's house. Lady SARAH is discovered sitting by a table writing, near the bottom of the stage.

Lady S. There is so much light thrown across my paper here, it makes me almost blind. Who's there ? is it you, Pry ?

Enter PRY from the adjoining room.

Pry. Yes, my lady ; I sits in this room here pretty often, for the servants are vulgar and rude

to me, and my own room is so lonesome I can't bear to be in it. Not that I hear any of them noises, excepting in the night-time; yet I can't help thinking of it all day long when I am alone. — First it comes to my door, “lowe, lowe, lowe!” just like a great bull: then it comes presently after, “scrie, scrie, scrie!” just like a raven, or a cock, or a cat, or any of those wild animals; and then for the groans that it gives — O! an old jack that has not been oil'd for a twelvemonth is a joke to it.

Lady S. (gravely.) Remove this table for me to the other end of the room: it is too much in the sun here. (*Pry removes the table near the front of the stage, and Lady S. sits down to write again without speaking; then looking up, and seeing Pry still by her.*) Leave me.

Pry. I'm just going, my lady: I believe I told you, my lady, that Robert tells me, the vicar always expects the present of a new gown and cassock when he is sent for to lay a ghost in any genteel house.

Lady S. Leave me, I say; I'll hear no more of that nonsense at present.

[EXIT *Pry*, and enter *Seabright*.]

Sea. What has that absurd creature been chatting about?

Lady S. Still about those strange noises.

Sea. I thought so: every noise is a thief or a ghost with her. Who are you writing to?

Lady S. I am writing to Lady Puler, to beg she will have the goodness to send me a few lines

by return of post, to let me know how her rheumatism does : her husband, you know, may have it in his power to serve you.

Sea. (nodding.) That is very right, my dear.

Lady S. And here is a letter I have just written to Lady Mary Markly : she is a spiteful toad, and I never could endure her ; but she is going to be married for the third time to a near relation of the minister's, and it will be proper in me, you know, to be very much interested in her approaching happiness.

Sea. Yes, perfectly right, my dear Lady Sarah ; I won't interrupt you. *(Sits down.)*

Lady S. Indeed, my dear Seabright, I have been in the habit of studying these things, and I know how to make my account in it. If people would but attend to it, every acquaintance that they make, every letter that they write, every dinner that they give, might be made to turn to some advantage.

Sea. (hastily, with marks of disgust.) No, no ! that is carrying it too far !

Lady S. Not at all, Mr. Seabright ! I sent a basket of the best fruit in your garden this morning even to old Mrs. Pewterer, the mayor of Crockdale's mother-in-law, and I dare say it won't be thrown away.

Sea. (smiling.) Well that, however, was very well thought of. But I interrupt you. *(She continues to write, and he sits musing for some time, then speaking to himself.)* A baronet of Great Britain and seven thousand a-year ! *(Smiling to himself.)*

Ay, that would be a resting place at which I could put up my horses, and say I have travell'd far enough. A baronet of Great Britain, and seven thousand a-year !

Lady S. (looking up from her paper.) A baronet of Great Britain you will soon be; this day's post, I trust, will inform you of that honour being conferred upon you; but the seven thousand a-year, I wish we were as sure of having that added to it.

Sea. I wish we were; but Mr. Plausible has been with me last night, and has pointed out a way to me, in which, by venturing a considerable capital on very small risk, a most prodigious gain might be made; and in which, money laid out —

Lady S. (interrupting him eagerly.) Will never return any more! (*Getting up alarmed.*) Pray, pray, my dear Seabright, don't frighten me! The very idea of such a scheme will throw me into a fit. — Don't let that man enter the house any more — he is a dark-eyed, needy-looking man — don't let him come here any more.

Sea. Why, what alarms you so much? he is a very uncommon man, and a man of genius.

Lady. S. Keep him out of the house, then, for heaven's sake! there is never any good got by admitting men of genius; and you may keep them all out of your house, I'm sure, without being very inhospitable.

Sea. Your over-caution will be a clog upon my fortune.

Lady S. A clog upon your fortune, Mr. Seabright! Am not I doing every thing that a woman can do to advance it? am not I writing letters for you? making intimacies for you? paying visits for you? teasing every body that is related to me within the fiftieth degree of consanguinity for you? —and is this being a clog upon your fortune?

Sea. Well, well! we shall see what it all comes to.

Lady S. Yes, we shall see; this very post will inform you of our success; I'm sure of it: and see, here are the letters.

(Enter Pry with letters, which she gives to Sea.; and then puts one down on the table for Lady Sarah, who is so busy looking at Seabright's that she does not perceive it.)

Lady S. *(to Pry, who seems inclined to stay.)* Don't wait: I shall call when I want you.

[EXIT PRY.]

Sea. *(opening a letter, and running his eye over it eagerly.)* Hang it! it is about the altering of a turnpike road. *(Throws it away impatiently, and opens another letter, which he reads in like manner.)* Stuff and nonsense, about friendship, and old acquaintance, and so on! What a parcel of fools there are in the world! Ha! what seal is this? *(Opening another letter eagerly.)* Hell, and the devil! it is a letter from your brother, and only a common-place letter of compliment, with never a word on the subject! *(Tearing the letters in a rage, and strewing them upon the floor.)* Cursed be pen, ink, and paper, and every one that puts his trust in them!

Lady S. Don't destroy the blank sides of your letters, Mr. Seabright, they will do to write notes upon.

Sea. O confound your little minute economy, Lady Sarah! it comes across me every now and then like the creeping of a spider: it makes me mad.

Lady S. (*putting aside her papers, much offended.*) I think I need scarcely give myself the trouble of writing any more to-day. (*Seeing the letter on her table.*) Ha! a letter from my brother to me! (*Opening it.*) And a later date I fancy than that which you have received. (*Reads it with her countenance brightening up.*)

Sea. (*looking eagerly at her.*) What's in it? (*She is silent.*) What's in it? for God's sake tell me!

Lady S. (*going up to him with a smiling face, and an affected formal curtesy.*) I have the honour to congratulate Sir Anthony Seabright.

Sea. Is it really so? Is it really so? Let me see, let me see. (*Snatches the letter from her, and reads it.*) O it is so, in very truth!—Give me your hand, my dear Lady Sarah! and give me a kiss too. (*Kisses her on one cheek, and she graciously turns to him the other.*) O one will do very well.—Where are all the children? let every soul in the house come about me!—No, no, no! let me be decent; let me be moderate.

Enter PLAUSIBLE.

Sea. (*going up joyfully to him.*) How do you do? how do you do, my very good friend?

Lady S. (pulling Sea. by the sleeve.) You know you are engaged ; you can't speak with any body at present.

Sea. I can do all I have to do very well, and give a quarter of an hour to Mr. Plausible, notwithstanding.

Lady S. (still pulling him.) You have many letters to write, and many other things.—You understand me ?

Plau. I shall have the pleasure of calling, then, to-morrow morning.

Lady S. He is engaged to-morrow morning.

Plau. And in the evening also ?

Lady S. Yes, Sir, and every hour in the day.—He has not yet laid out his fortune to such advantage as will enable him to bestow quite so much leisure time upon his friends as Mr. Plausible.

Plau. I can never regret the leisure time I have upon my hands, since it has given me an opportunity of obliging your ladyship : I have procured the inestimable receipt for whitening linen without soap, that I mention'd to you, and I shall bring it to you to-morrow.

Lady S. Pray don't take the trouble ! I am much obliged to you : but we are all so much occupied ! (*To Sea.*) Are not you going to write by return of post ?

Sea. (to Plau.) I am really much engaged at present : the King has been graciously pleased, tho' most unworthy of it, and most unlook'd-for on my part, to honour me with the dignity of a baronet of Great Britain.

Plau. I rejoice, my dear Sir, I congratulate you with all my heart ; and I have the honour to congratulate your ladyship also.

Lady S. I thank you, Sir—good morning—good morning.

Sea. (to *Plau.*) Trifling as these things may be, yet as a mark of royal favour ——

Lady S. (*impatiently.*) Yes, yes ; he knows all that well enough.—Good morning. (*To Plau.*) You will positively have no time to write your letters by the return of post. (*To Sea. pulling him away, who bows to Plau. and goes with her unwillingly. Turning round suddenly to Plau. as they are just going out.*) Whitening linen without soap ?

Plau. Yes, Madam ; and no expence of any kind in the business.

Lady S. When you are passing this way, at any rate, I should be glad to look at it.

Plau. I shall have the honour very soon of calling upon your ladyship.

Lady S. You are very obliging. You will excuse us ; you will excuse us, Mr. Plausible ; we are really obliged to be extremely rude to you.

[*EXEUNT Lady S. and Sea.*]

Plau. (*alone.*) Ha, ha, ha ! I shall keep my hold still, I find.

Enter PROWLER, looking cautiously about as he enters.

What do you want ?

Pro. Unless you want to be laid up by the heels, don't go out of this house by the same door that

you enter'd it. I have waited in the passage here to tell you.

Plau. Ha ! have they found me out ?

Pro. Yes, by my faith, there are two as ugly looking fellows waiting for you at the front entry as ever made a poor debtor's heart quake. There is surely some back door in this house.

Enter ROBERT.

(*To Rob.*) My good friend, I want to know where we can find a back way out of this house.

Rob. And I want to know when I am to have the crown I intrusted to you.

Pro. To me, Sir ?

Rob. Yes, to you, Sir ; and you know it very well, you do.

Pro. O ! you are my friend Robert, that I was enquiring after.

Rob. Yes, Sir ; and I will have my money directly ; for I know you are a cheat ; I know it by your very face.

Pro. Ha, ha, ha ! So you prefer having a crown to-day to receiving ten guineas to morrow ?

Rob. Receiving ten fiddle-strings to-morrow ! Pay me my crown directly.

Pro. Very well, with all my heart ; but you must sign me a paper, in the first place, giving up all right to the ten guineas you are entitled to. (*Robert hesitates.*) Nay, nay, I'm not such an ass as you take me for : there is pen, ink, and paper. (*Pointing to the table.*) Sign me a right to the ten guineas directly.

Rob. (*scratching his head.*) Well, we'll let it stand, if you please, till another time.

Pro. I thought so : faith you're too cunning for me ! But shew us the way to the back door, quickly.

Rob. And should you like to come that way to-morrow, when you bring me the money ? I shall be sure to be in the way to let you in.

Pro. Let us out by the back door to-day, and let me in to-morrow by any door you please.

[EXEUNT.]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. Seabright's library. *Enter* SEABRIGHT, *as if from a short journey, and the Eldest Boy running after him.*

Boy. O papa, papa! I'm glad you're come back again! And have you said over your speech to the Parliament? and did they say any fine speeches back again to you?

Sea. Go away, George: I'm fatigu'd; I can't speak to you now.

Enter ROBERT.

Rob. Won't your honour have some refreshment after your journey? My lady is gone out an airing: you had better have something.

Sea. No, nothing, Robert.—A glass of water, if you please. (*Sits down grave and dispirited, whilst Robert fetches the water, and the Boy plays about the room.*)

Rob. (*presenting the water.*) I'll warrant now that you have had a power of fine talking in this Parliament house; and I warrant your honour's speech was as well regarded as any of it.

Sea. I thank you, Robert: I am fatigued, and would be alone for a little: take that boy away in

your hand. (EXEUNT Rob. and the Boy, and Sea. remains some time musing with a dissatisfied face ; then speaking to himself.) “The conciseness with which the Honourable Baronet who spoke last has treated this question.” Ah ! but I was, — I was too concise ! The whole train of connecting and illustrative thoughts, which I had been at so much pains, beforehand, to fix and arrange in my head, vanish’d from me as I rose to speak ; and nothing of all that I had prepared presented itself before me, but the mere heads of the subject, standing up barren and bare, like so many detach’d rocks in a desert land. (*Starting up.*) This will never do ! I’m sure I have not spared myself : I have labour’d night and day at this speech : I have work’d at it like a slave in a mine ; and yet, when I came to the push, it deceived me. (*Shaking his head.*) This will never do ! let me rest satisfied with what I have got, and think of being a speaker no more. (*Stands despondingly for a little while, with his arms across, then suddenly becoming animated.*) No ! I will not give it up ! I saw an old school-fellow of mine in the lobby, as I went out, who whisper’d to the person standing next him as I pass’d, that I was his townsman. Does not this look as if my speech, even such as I was enabled to give it, had been approved of ? O, I will not give it up ! This is the only way to high distinctions : I must drudge and labour still. Heigh ho ! (*Yawning grievously. A gentle tap is heard at the door.*) Who’s there ? (*Angrily.*)

Soph. (*without.*) May I come in, papa ?

Sea. Yes, yes ; but what do you want ?

Enter SOPHIA, timidly.

Soph. I only come, my dear Sir, to see how you do after your journey. But you don't look well, papa ; you don't look happy : has any thing displeas'd you ?

Sea. No, my good girl.

Soph. (*kissing his hand.*) I thank you, papa, for calling me your good girl : I was your good girl.

Sea. And are so still, my dear Sophia ; but you must sometimes excuse me ; I am not very happy.

Soph. Ah, papa ! I know what makes you unhappy.

Sea. (*shaking his head.*) Thou dost not ! thou dost not !

Soph. Ah, but I do ! and nobody told it me neither — I can just see it my own self. You are giving yourself a great deal of trouble, and courting very proud and very disagreeable people, for what you very probably won't get ; and you are grieved to think that Lady Sarah does not treat us so kindly as she might do. But don't be unhappy : don't court those proud people any more : you have enough to live upon as you used to do ; and Lady Sarah will be kinder to us by-and-bye. I know she will ; for she loves little Tony already ; and if she should not, we will never complain.

Sea. (*kissing her.*) My sweet child ! thou deservest — O thou deservest more than I can ever do for thee !

Soph. (gladly.) Do you say so, indeed? O then do this for me!

Sea. What is it, Sophia?

Soph. Trouble yourself no more with great people, and studying of speeches for that odious Parliament; and when Lady Sarah is out of the way, let the children come and play about you again, as they used to do.

Sea. (tenderly.) I thank you, my good child, but you don't understand these things. (*Walks thoughtfully across the room, and then returns to her again.*) There is an office which Lord Allcrest has promised to procure for me, that would bring me a considerable and permanent addition to my income; if I once had that secured, I believe, in truth, it would be no unwise thing in me to follow your advice.

Soph. O, my dear Sir, I hope you will have it, then! (*skipping joyfully.*) I hope you will have it!

(*Enter a Servant, and announces Sir Crafty Supplecoat.*)

Sea. Sir Crafty here! can any thing have happen'd for me?

Soph. O if it should be the place!—But shall I go away? for I don't like to see that man.

Sea. No, my dear, stay with me; I like to have you beside me.

Soph. Then I will stay; for I am happy now, and I can look upon him boldly.

Enter Sir CRAFTY SUPPLECOAT.

Sea. Sir Crafty, your servant; I'm very happy to see you.

Sir C. Your servant, Sir Anthony ; I'm happy in being able to pay you my respects. — Miss Seabright I hope is well. (*Bowing to Soph. who returns his civility with cheerfulness.*) Indeed, Sir Anthony, I have long'd ever since I heard your speech in the House, which, for a maiden speech — Well, I will not say what it was. — I have long'd to declare to you the extreme pleasure I take in the fair career that is now open'd before you, and in being permitted to consider myself as one of your friends.

Sea. You do me great honour ; I am infinitely obliged to you. My speech indeed ought — it ought to have —— (*hesitating.*)

Sir C. To have been just what it was, my dear Baronet. Your friends enjoyed it ; and, let me say it freely, without envy.

Sea. I am much flatter'd : their praises are — are —— (*hesitating.*)

Sir C. Are proportion'd to their admiration, Sir Anthony ; and they have great pleasure in talking of it.

Sea. (*eagerly.*) Ha ! do they talk much of it ?

Sir C. Yes ; more than I would venture to repeat to you.

Sea. Friends, indeed, say many things that ought not to be believed.

Sir C. I assure you, yours say many things which one of the qualities you so eminently possess would not, perhaps, suffer you to believe. Eloquence — eloquence, my dear Sir — great things are to be attain'd in this country by elo-

quence. Eloquence and high connections give a man such velocity in moving, that nothing can stop his career. — But I ought to tell you, by-the-bye, that old Saunter is dead, unexpectedly; and that office, if indeed it can be consider'd as any object to you now, is ready for your acceptance.

Soph. (aside to Sea.) Is that the office, papa?

Sea. Yes, child: hold your tongue. (*aloud.*) I am obliged to you for this intelligence, Sir Crafty: an office for life, tho' not very considerable, is of some consequence to a man who has a family of children. (*Soph. takes her father's hand and presses it gratefully.*)

Sir C. Ha, ha, ha! Sir Anthony Seabright, with all his abilities and connections, is, like a very good father, anxious to provide for his family! I thought, my dear Sir, such talents as yours had generally been accompanied with an aspiring temper; but Lady Sarah's prudent character, I perceive, has had its effect upon you.

Sea. No, no; you are wrong.

Sir C. Nay, pardon me if I say that you also are wrong, in fixing yourself down, in the very beginning of your career, as a quiet unambitious man, who is glad to be early provided for in a quiet, humble permanency; for this office, you know, is regarded as —

Sea. (interrupting him eagerly.) What, is it regarded in that light?

Sir C. It really is. Mr. Trotman, now promoted to a peerage, and whose first speech, by-the-bye,

very much resembled your own, refused it on that very account; and Mr. Brown, and Mr. Wilson, and Sir Samuel Soppet, and many other Misters and Sirs, promoted to the same dignity, would never have got on, be assured, if they had thus fixed themselves down at the very threshold of advancement.

Sea. But I see no reason why accepting such an office as this should hinder one from advancing.

Sir C. I can give you no good reason for it, I confess; but there have been certain places, time out of mind, which have, somehow or other, been consider'd as indicative or otherwise of promotion, and which stand up in the great field of honours like finger-posts in a wide-track'd common, saying "This is the way to such a place:" they who are once possess'd of those places, move on to the others, for no earthly reason, that we can perceive, but because they have been placed in the first; and this you will readily allow is no time for innovation.

Sea. I believe there is something in what you say.

Sir C. There is so much in it, that if you can find some less aspiring friend, to whom you can with confidence give up this office, relying on his honour to assist you with the full weight of his interest on all future occasions, I am sure you will never think of accepting it.

Soph. (*laying hold of her father's arm, and speaking eagerly to Sir Crafty.*) Ah, but he will, tho'!

Sea. Sophia, you forget yourself. (*She shrinks back abash'd.*)

Sir C. (smiling) It is an amiable weakness in this interested age to forget yourself, and confined, I believe, to young ladies alone.

Soph. (provoked and roused.) I believe, at least, political baronets, tho' not very old, do but seldom fall into it. (*archly.*) And I know, papa, who this friend is that will so kindly take this office off your hands. Sir Crafty will name him to you by-and-bye : it is a man who does not forget himself.

Sea. (displeased.) What is the meaning of this, Sophia? I never saw you thus petulant before : I beg of you to retire : Sir Crafty and I must not be interrupted.

Soph. I will retire, my dear Sir — but oh ! (*taking her father's hand and pressing it,*) but oh ! — you know what I would say to you.

[EXIT, casting a significant look to Seabright as she goes out.]

Sea. (after a considerable pause.) Sir Crafty, there is much in what you say and I believe you are perfectly disinterested in the advice you give me ; but I don't know that I could justify myself to my own mind in refusing this office.

Sir. C. There are few men less interested than myself ; I will say it, Sir Anthony ; I will say it proudly. — Pardon me, however, I do not presume to advise you ; but hearing Lord Clacker, and the Marquis of Lackland, and some others, talking of your speech, and the usual race of such abilities, and so forth, many suggestions arose in

my mind, in regard to you, my dear Sir, which I very naturally supposed just now might have presented themselves to your own.

Sea. Ha! did Lord Clacker and the Marquis of Lackland talk of my speech, and my abili — I mean the probable effects of my situation and connections?

Sir C. I assure you they spoke of both in a way very gratifying for a friend, so much interested in your promotion as I am, to hear: — but remember, I give you no advice: I am a young man, and apt, perhaps, to be too sanguine where the admiration of talents may mislead me: I am too presumptuous to mention my opinion at all.

Sea. (*taking his hand with warmth.*) O, no! I like you the better for it! to be warmly sanguine is characteristic and graceful in youth; and perhaps this propensity does not more often mislead it than the timorous caution of age. — You mention'd a friend to whom I might resign my pretensions to this office?

Sir C. I did, Sir Anthony; but I now feel an embarrassment. — I'm sure it would never have enter'd into my imagination to think of it. But will you be kind enough to take a turn with me in the garden? There are some things that must be explain'd to you at length, lest you should at all misconceive what I'm going to propose to you.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

The Servants' Hall; and Robert discovered pulling some Clothes out of a Bag, and laughing to himself as he looks at them. Enter Cook-maid.

Cook. Are you here, Robert?

Rob. Yes, beef-drippings; what do you want?

Cook. It is ghost-time, don't you know? and your night for it, too.

Rob. Indeed!

Cook. Ay, indeed! I groan'd last night, and Gardener the night before; so e'en take your own turn when it comes to you: you was the first contriver of the plot.

Rob. Why don't you see me preparing, hussy? I'm going to dress myself up this very night for the grand contasterfy, as a learned person would call it.

Cook. (*clapping her hands.*) O griskins and gravy, but that be delightful! Are you to appear to her to-night?

Rob. Yes, wench; for my master is in town, and is not expected back before to-morrow. (*Holding out the clothes.*) How do you like this black robe? Has it not a smack of the devil in it?

Cook. Black! I thought you were to have been all in white, like my late lady, and to have threaten'd her for being so unkind to the children.

Rob. So I intended, Deborah; but I don't know how, a qualm came across my heart, and

would not let me make a mockery and a semblance of my dear mistress ; so we'll just make the devil do, my fat Deborah ; he'll serve our turn well enough.

Cook. Yes ; he serves many a turn, if all that is said of him be true.

Rob. How do you like that black hood with the horns to it ? it is all my own contrivance.

Cook. O it will do hugely !

Rob. And pray mix a little sooty grease for my face, cooky ; and let me have some brick-dust to make a red staring ring round my eyes.

Cook. That I will in a trice ! But where is your tail, master devil ? Will the jack-chain be of any use to you ?

Rob. No, no ! let her once have a good look of my horns, and my red staring eyes, and I warrant you she'll never miss my tail.

Cook. Good success to you !

Rob. I don't doubt of success ; for my lady has lived a great part of her life in an old castle in the North, and has as good a notion of a ghost or a goblin as most folks.

Cook. He, he, he ! Some folks will be warm enough to-night without frying cutlets. And bless you, man ! if Mrs. Pry should come in your way, give her a claw for my sake.

Rob. O never doubt that, hussy !— And here, in good time, comes Sharp to settle his part of the business ; for you know we are to give his master a claw too, as well as Mrs. Pry.

Enter SHARP.

Cook. Come away, Sharp ; which of us all is to visit your master's chamber to-night in the shape of the lady that he jilted, as you told us of, because her rich uncle chose to marry whilst their wedding clothes were a-making, and who took it so much to heart, poor thing ! that she died soon after of the small-pox ? I should not much care to do it myself.

Sharp. No, cooky, we have a better plan than that !

Cook. What is it, man ?

Sharp. Tho' he laughs at Miss Seabright as a girl from the nursery, he has taken a strong desire to know whether she likes him or not ; and, above all, what fortune she is to have : now I have promised to set Pry a talking to her lady about this, when she puts her to bed to-night, and to place him snugly in the adjoining chamber where he may hear every word that they say.

Rob. You have told him there is no danger of being discover'd, as that room is always kept lock'd, and that you have stolen the key of it ?

Sharp. You may be sure of that.

Rob. Then you may be sure the devil won't fail to take that chamber on his way from Lady Sarah's, and pay his respects to him in passing. Come, come ! let us all set about it ! I'll dress in my own garret. Take some of those things in your hand.

(Giving Cook some of the clothes to carry, and taking the rest himself.) [EXEUNT.]

SCENE III.

Lady SARAH's Bed-room, almost dark, with a feeble Light thrown across the Floor, as from a bad Fire. Enter Sir CRAFTY SUPPLECOAT and SHARP, stealing softly on their Tiptoes.

Sir C. Hist, hist ! which is the door, Sharp ?

Sharp. Never fear, Sir ; come this way. (*Opening the door of an adjoining room.*) Go in, Sir, and fear nothing. But you must sit in the dark, and not be impatient : Pry won't fail to pump her lady, and you'll hear every word that is said. (*Putting Sir Crafty into the room, and pretending to lock the door upon him, then exit laughing to himself as he goes out.*)

Enter Lady SARAH and PRY carrying Lights by the same Door by which SHARP went out, allowing him time to get out of the way without meeting him.

Pry. (*setting down the lights.*) Well, I wish this night were well over, for I had such strange dreams last night.

Lady S. Don't trouble me with your dreams now. Have you put all my muslin things into the press, and screw'd them well down ? When the creases are taken out of them, they will do perfectly well to wear another day.

Pry. To be sure, my lady ; but for that old petticoat, if I do but touch it, it comes to pieces : it grieves me to see your ladyship dragging it about

like a cobweb that the flies have been thro': it would tear up into such pretty handkerchiefs!

Lady S. Will it? as large as those I commonly wear?

Pry. O, no! I don't mean such handkerchiefs as you would wear, my lady, but just ——

Lady S. Don't tease me now. — Have you heard any of those noises to-night? (*Seating herself in a chair near the front of the stage.*)

Pry. La, no! my lady: did you hear any thing?

Lady S. No, nothing at all: why do you look so frighten'd?

Pry. I'm sure the very thoughts of it has made my teeth to chatter like a spoon in an empty dish. I never heard of such things being heard in any house, except the old Castle of Allcrest, just before the Earl, your grandfather, died. Mercy on us! there was no such noises heard in our village.

Lady S. Apparitions seldom visit people of low condition, Pry.

Pry. God be praised for it! I hope this here will be of the same way of thinking. I would not be a great lady and have ghosts grunting at my bedside for the whole universal world. If you please, my lady, I should like to go up to Susan as soon as may be, pardon my boldness, for she is as frighten'd as I am; and I may chance to meet something on the stairs, if I am much later; and I know very well, my lady, you're not afraid.

Lady S. No, I'm not afraid, but I don't know how — I have a little of I don't know what, that

has come upon me. — You had better sleep on the couch by my bed to-night: I may want my drops in the night-time. — What o'clock is it?

Pry. (*looking at the watch.*) Mercy on us! it's just the very time when it begins. — What's that?
(*Alarmed.*)

Lady S. Nothing: I heard nothing. (*A long pause; then a deep groan is heard from the bottom of the stage.*) Come, come! stand closer to me, *Pry.* (*Taking hold of Pry.*) It had a strange, hollow, unnatural sound.

Pry. Yes; just like a body speaking out of a coffin.

(*A pause, and then a second groan is heard, louder than the first.*)

Lady S. Stand closer still, I beseech you: that was horrible! (*Putting out her hand, trembling.*) Whe — whe — where is the bell-rope?

Pry. O, la! you know well enough it hangs in the other end of the room.

Lady S. Go pull it then: pull it violently. (*Pry hesitates, and seems very unwilling to go.*) Go, I say!

(*Pry goes; and as she is half-way across the room, another groan, followed by a terrible howl, is heard, and she runs back again to Lady Sarah.*)

Lady S. O go and do it! for heaven's sake! for God's sake! for mercy's sake do it! (*Pry then goes sidling across the floor, looking on every side with terror and suspicion, till she gets to the bell-rope which hangs by the head of the bed, and near the door of the room; when,*

putting out her hand to pull it, Robert dressed like the devil, rises from behind a great chair close to the bed. Pry screams and runs out of the door, whilst he gives her a claw in the passing, and then advances towards the front of the stage to Lady Sarah.

Lady S. (shrinking back as he advances.) O, come no nearer, whatever thou be, thou black and horrible sight! (Devil still advances.) O, come no nearer! in the holy name of ——

Devil. Baw! (giving a great howl and still advancing.)

Lady S. In the blessed name of ——

Devil. Baw! (with another howl, and coming very near her.)

Lady S. (falling upon her knees, and clasping her hands together.) O, as thou art awful, be merciful! O, touch me not, for I am a miserable sinner!

Devil. Yea, thou art—yea, thou art—yea, thou art, and thou shalt smart. Ill deeds thou dost, and thou shalt roast. (Holding his great claw over her.)

Lady S. (contracting all her body together, and sinking down upon the floor.) O, as thou art horrible, be merciful! What shall I do? what shall I do?

Devil. Be kind to thy husband's children, or I will tear ——

Lady S. O, yes, yes!

Devil. Give them good victuals, and good education, and good clothing, or I will tear thee——

Lady S. O, yes, yes!

Devil. And give no more good things to Tony than the rest, or I will — (*starting back upon hearing a loud knocking at the street door.*) What's that?

Lady S. (*raising her head and seeing him farther off.*) No more good things to Tony than the rest! It was no devil that spoke those words, I'm sure.

(*Taking courage, and getting up.*)

Devil. (*aside, after moving farther off, and listening.*) Faith, I'll turn and give her a claw yet! I shall never have another opportunity. (*Approaching her again.*)

Lady S. Get along! I know you well enough: you are no devil, but a rascally knave. (*Setting herself in a posture of defence, when a noise is heard without, and he, taking alarm, makes a hasty exit into the adjoining chamber.*)

Enter SEABRIGHT, and PRY coming fearfully after him.

Sea. Where is this devil that Pry has been telling me of?

Lady S. (*pointing to the adjoining room.*) Follow him, my dear Sir Anthony! Follow after the rascal. [*Exit Seabright, into the adjoining room.*]

Lady S. (*calling to him.*) Be sure you don't let him escape. — Have you caught him yet?

Sea. (*within.*) Yes, I've caught him.

Lady S. Give him a good beating, then; don't spare him! he's a good brawny devil! O, don't spare him!

(*A great scuffle is heard within, and Sea. calls to Lady S.*) I'm dealing with him roughly enough, if that will satisfy you. (*He then calls out as if speaking*

to the devil.) And take that, and that, and that, too, you diabolical rascal! You must have midnight frolics in my house, must you?

Enter SOPHIA, alarmed.

Sophia. What is all this? Did I not hear my father's voice?

Lady S. (looking suspiciously at her.) Yes, you know nothing of the matter, innocent lamb!

Pry. I hope my master will give him a sound beating, for I know well enough it is that knave Robert: I could smell the very stink of his tobacco as he claw'd me in the passing.

Lady S. Drag him to the light, Sir Anthony: let us see him stript of his devil's skin. Ha! here he comes.

Enter SEABRIGHT, dragging in Sir CRAFTY SUPPLECOAT, who is pulled along very unwillingly, and hiding his face with his arm.

Pry. Why that an't like him, neither. Come, come! take down your arm, and let us see who you are. (*Pulling down his arm, and discovering his face.*)

All. (exclaiming.) Sir Crafty Supplecoat!

Soph. (clapping her hands.) O, I'm glad of that! I'm so glad that it is only Sir Crafty! I should have been grieved indeed if it had been poor Robert. And so it is you, Sir Crafty! ha, ha, ha, ha! (*All join her in laughing heartily, whilst Robert, having pulled off his devil's dress, enters accompanied by Sharp, and some of the other servants, and joins also in the laugh.*)

Lady. S. (*going up to Sir Crafty with great indignation.*) And so, Sir Crafty Supplecoat, it is to your midnight mummary I am indebted for the stern and solemn threatenings I have received ! I have been visited I find by a devil of consequence. Your earnest zeal for my reformation is, indeed, very flattering.

Sea. Sir Crafty, mean and despicable as you must appear to me, I have too much respect for your situation in life to expose you any longer to this open humiliation and disgrace. Come with me to my dressing-room.

Sir C. I protest to you, Sir Anthony, and to Lady Sarah, and to all the world if they were here present, that I am in no wise concern'd in what you suspect me of.

Lady S. O, certainly you protest, Sir Crafty ! but do you think that will pass upon me ? Have I not known you since you were a boy but so high, with all your little, artful, wriggling, under-hand ways of getting your play-fellows' toys from them, which I always despised and contemned ? To be sure, you will protest any thing, and in the politest manner, too : you will send a message to Sir Anthony to morrow morning, I doubt not, to enquire how he does ; and to hope that his fists are not too much fatigued with their last night's exertions. (*All the servants laugh again.*)

Sea. Come, come, this is too bad ! Retire with me, Sir Crafty : you can say nothing for yourself at

this moment. I am sorry I have rib-roasted you so unmercifully ; can you walk ?

Sir C. (very shortly.) Yes, yes.

Rob. O we'll help his honour. (*Going up with Sharp, very provokingly, to assist him.*)

Sir C. Keep off, scoundrels ! you are at the bottom of all this.

[*EXEUNT Seabright leading out Sir Crafty in a very rueful plight, followed by Lady Sarah and Sophia, and the servants, endeavouring to stifle their laughter.*]

SCENE IV.

SEABRIGHT'S Library. A great noise and confusion of voices is heard without.

Seabright. (speaking without.) Torment me no more with these things ! I will hear no more complaints, and no more explanations ! Let me have peace, I beseech you, in mine own house, for one half-hour at least. (*He enters much disturbed, shutting the door violently behind him, and pacing up and down the room, sometimes muttering to himself, and sometimes speaking aloud.*) What ! is there no getting on in this upward path of honour, unless we tear our way through all these briars and nettles ? — Contention and misery at home ! is this the price we pay for honour and distinction in the world ? Would no honours take root on my untoward soil, till I had grubb'd up every sprig and shoot of comfort to make room for them ? It were better to be a panniered jack-ass, and pick up my scanty provender from

the ditch, than be a garter'd peer in such a home as this.— I had once a home ! (*beating his heel rapidly upon the floor.*) — Well, well, well, I have push'd my bark from the shore, and I must take wind and tide as they set.

Enter Servant.

Who comes to disturb me now ?

Ser. A packet, please your honour, from Mr. Plausible.

Sea. (eagerly.) Ha ! give it me. (*EXIT Ser.*) Yes, it is the plan. (*Tearing off the cover.*) I hold in my hand, perhaps, that which shall put every domestic arrangement on such an ample footing, as must extinguish these petty broils. (*A pause, and then his countenance lightening up eagerly.*) Ah, do I indeed grasp in this handful of paper the embryo of my future fortune ? In faith, I could almost believe that I do ! Let me go to my closet and examine it. [*EXIT.*

SCENE V.

A Room in the Inn. Enter SEABRIGHT and Landlady, speaking as they enter.

Sea. So, Mr. Plausible is not yet come ?

Land. No, your honour, not as I know of. There is a dark-looking, lank gentleman in the cow-yard, just now, asking our Bridget how many pounds of butter may be made out of one cow's milk in a year, and such like, and setting all that she says down in his pocket-book. He, he, he ! poor thing, she scarcely knows a cow from a

sheep, by reason that she is but a poor pea-picking girl from St. Giles's, that has scarcely been a month in the country; howsomever, he gets wonderfully on with his information.

Sea. Ay, that is him : he has a talent for picking up information upon every subject, and from every body : pray let him know I am here. (EXIT Land.)— (*After musing a little while.*) Ten thousand a-year ! and the risk of failing but a mere trifle, not to be taken into the calculation. And his reasons are good, obvious, and convincing. But let me be moderate now : let me suppose that it only brings me in six thousand a-year ; even that will entitle me to a peerage.

Enter PLAUSIBLE.

Plau. I have a request to make to you, Sir Anthony.

Sea. What is that, my dear Plausible ?

Plau. When you purchase the large estate in Shropshire, will you let me have an easy lease of a good-pasture farm or two upon it ? It will be a country-retirement for me ; and I find on calculation that a hundred milk-cows, well fed and well managed, will bring in no contemptible revenue.

Sea. (*smiling.*) You talk of this estate with great confidence, Plausible.

Plau. Nay, I am only certain of putting the money to buy it into your pocket ; you will purchase it or not, as you please.

Sea. I begin, indeed, to think favourably of

your scheme, and I appointed you to meet me here that we might not be interrupted by Lady Sarah. Women, you know, are timorous, and have no idea of increasing a fortune except by saving. We shall look over your calculations together. If salt is raised but one penny in the pound, how many thousands do I put in my pocket?

Plau. This paper will inform you exactly. And you see I have put but one penny upon the pound; for salt being a necessary of life, greatly to increase its price would be hard and unfeeling; it would make you unpopular in the country, and in the end create a resistance detrimental to its own ends. I am for moderate and sure gains.

Sea. (*taking the paper.*) I esteem you for it; my ideas coincide with yours most perfectly in this particular; and the paper also, in which you have drawn out your plan for buying up the rock-salt, I should be glad to look over that.

Plau. Here it is in my pocket.

Enter BEAUMONT and WILLIAM BEAUMONT.

Sea. (*angrily.*) Who comes now? O, it is you, Beaumont. We are busy; I shall come to you by-and-bye, but at present I cannot be interrupted.

Bea. I must speak with you, my friend.

Sea. Not at present:—you see I am engaged.

Bea. (*beckoning him.*) But one word in your ear, I beseech you.

Sea. Yes, by-and-bye; at present I am busy with affairs of importance.

Bea. By-and-bye will, perhaps, be too late : I must speak with you immediately. (*Beckoning him again.*)

Sea. (*impatiently.*) I cannot speak with you just now, Beaumont, and I will not.

Bea. No, no ! you will. If there be any love of God, or any love of man in your heart, you will speak with me.

Sea. (*softened.*) Well then. (*Goes to Beaumont, who whispers in his ear, and endeavours to draw him away.*) No, I won't go with you, Beaumont, to be retarded and cross'd with your fears and suspicions : speak out boldly, and Mr. Plausible will answer for himself. (*Smiling to Plau.*) I believe we must explain our plan to this good friend of mine, for he thinks you are going to ruin me, and he is miserably afraid of projectors ; ha, ha, ha !

Plau. (*smiling placidly.*) I esteem him for the interest he takes in his friend, and I don't condemn his suspicions : there are so many absurd schemes in the world, that it is prudent to be distrustful ; but I will show him the firm ground on which we rest, and he will be satisfied. Do me the honour, my dear Sir, to sit down by me, and I'll explain it to you. (*To Beau.*)

Bea. Pray don't take that trouble, Mr. Plausible : I have no information for enabling me to judge of it : my mind has been little exercised in regard to the money-affairs of the world. But

though I am not a man of the world, I have one or two things to say to my friend that I wish him to attend to.

Sea. (smiling rather contemptuously.) Well, what are they, Beaumont? you are, indeed, not a man of the world.

Bea. Every man who risks his fortune in any scheme believes he has good grounds to rest upon : they are such as appear feasible to him.

Sea. Feasible ! ours is certain.

Bea. (shaking his head.) A man who is anxious to get rich is apt to let his judgment be imposed upon, and forgets how many have fail'd in the same track before him.

Sea. I wish those who are apt to give advice, would take the same thing into their consideration.

Bea. Nay, my friend, there is a social influence which we all have, even the meanest of us, over one another, and there is more advice taken in the world than you are aware of. But had every adviser from the beginning of time fail'd before me, I will never believe that he who pleads to a father in behalf of his own children will speak without effect. Hear me then ; let him who stands alone, run every risk to aggrandize himself, but let a father — O let the father of a family consider !

Plau. You forget, my good Sir, that the father of a family has a higher motive than any other man to aggrandize himself.

Sea. (*vehemently.*) Rather than not place my children in the situation I desire for them, I would have no children at all.

Bea. (*with warmth.*) What! will you say of creatures passing onward to the noblest destination, you had rather they had never been, unless they can gather up so much dust and trash on their way? You think yourself an ambitious parent—O, I would be for them a thousand times more ambitious than thou art.

Sea. Yes, you will shape your son's fortune out of the clouds, I make no doubt. (*Smiling contemptuously.*)

Will. B. (*who has modestly kept behind, now coming forward with spirit.*) Wherever my fortune may be shaped for me, to be the honest, well-principled son of an honest and good father, is a distinction I would not give up for all that you, and men like you, are scrambling for. (*Turning to Bea.*) Come away, father; they but mock at what you say.

Bea. Let him mock if he will, but let him hear me.

Plau. He will hear your advice with great pleasure from the pulpit, Mr. Beaumont.

Will. B. It would have been happy for the unfortunate men who have listened to yours, Mr. Plausible, if they had received it from the same place. (*Pulling Beaumont away.*) Come away, father, you but waste words upon them.

Bea. Nay, I would yet try if there is not some heart in him to be moved.

Sea. My dear Beaumont, you are a very good man, but you know nothing of the matter.

Will. B. (*pulling away his father.*) Leave them, leave them, Sir! Good man, as he contemptuously calls you, you are also wise enough for me: and I would not exchange fathers with the proudest young lord in the kingdom.

[*EXEUNT Bea. and Will. B., Will. putting his father's arm proudly under his, and walking off with spirit.*]

Plau. We are obliged to that young dog, however, for taking him away.

Sea. Yes; but we'll go to another room, for he may return again. [EXEUNT.]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I. — SEABRIGHT'S *Library*. *He is discovered sitting by a Table fast asleep, on which are scattered Letters and Papers. Enter PRY softly behind on her Tiptoes, and making a long Neck to see what he is about.*

Pry. (*shaking her head piteously.*) Poor man ! poor man ! he can't sleep in his bed o' nights, and yet he has never committed any wicked crimes, that I ever heard of.

Sea. (*angrily, after speaking inarticulately to himself in his sleep.*) You don't know my name ! (*muttering again inarticulately.*) The name of Lord Seabright ! (*muttering again, whilst Pry slips still nearer to him, listening with a face of great curiosity.*) I can't walk in my robes any longer. — See how the crowd stares at me ; ha, ha, ha ! (*laughing uncouthly, and Pry drawing still nearer him, comes against a chair on her way, the noise of which wakes him, and she retires precipitately.*) What's that ? (*rubbing his eyes and looking round.*) It has been some noise in my dream. Ah ! would it had been a reality ! — What a busy, prosperous, animating world I have been in for these last two hours. (*looking at his watch.*) Ha ! I have slept only a quarter of an

hour ; and I have enjoyed as many honours in that short term as would enrich my lifetime. — Shall they indeed enrich it ? — Wise men, in former ages, consider'd the visions of our sleep as faintly sketching out what is to happen, like trees and castles seen thro' the morning mist, before the brightening sun gives to them the distinct clearness of reality. (*Smiling animatedly.*) In faith I could almost believe it ! There is that vigorating confidence within me which says I shall not stop short at these paltry attainments — A baronet ! every body now is a baronet. — My soul disdains the thought. (*Gives his chair a kick, and overturning it with a great noise,*)

Enter PRY alarmed.

Pry. O la, Sir ! what is the matter ?

Sea. What ! are you up, Pry ? Why are you out of bed so late ?

Pry. Making your coffee, Sir.

Sea. Did not I tell you to leave it on the lamp, and go to bed ?

Pry. Yes ; but I thought it would keep warmer, somehow, if I sat by it myself.

Sea. (*aside.*) Great fool ! (*aloud.*) Let me have some of it, then ; my head will be clearer afterwards for writing. [EXIT.

Pry. (*shaking her head, and looking after him as he goes out.*) Poor man ! he would have every body to go to bed but himself. What has he got here now ? (*looking at the papers on the table.*) Copies of letters to my Lord B—, and notes for

a speech on the salt duties ; and calculations. — O lud, lud ! What a power of trouble he does give himself ! Poor man ! poor man ! (EXIT *in a hurry, calling out as she goes,*) I just stay'd behind, Sir, to stir the fire for you.

SCENE II.

A Room in the Inn. Enter Mrs. BEAUMONT and Landlady, by different sides.

Land. La, madam ! here be the great Lord, Lady Sarah Seabright's brother, who wants to see you.

Mrs. B. Wants to see me ? how comes this great condescension ?

Land. I reckon, Madam, that some misfortune has befallen him, and that makes some folks wonderfully well bred. I was just standing at the door, a few minutes ago, and thinking, to be sure, nothing at all of the matter, when who should I see drive past but my Lord, just turning the corner as he used to do to Sir Anthony's gate. Well, I thinks no more of the matter, when in a trice by comes that saucy-looking gentleman of his, that turns up his nose at my ale, and puts a letter into his lord's hand ; upon which, after he had read it, he desired his postillions to turn round and set him down here. I'm sure as I am a living woman that something has happen'd, for he came into the house with a face as white as my apron.

Mrs. B. And wants to see me ?

Land. Yes, Madam ; he ask'd first of all for

Mr. Beaumont, and finding he had walk'd out, he ask'd next for you.

Mrs. B. But how did he know we were here?

Land. La, Madam ! he saw your carriage in the yard ; and moreover your man told him that his master and mistress had stopp'd here, on their way to Yorkshire, to see Sir Anthony's children. But here he comes, Madam. Save us all ! how proud and how vexed he looks ! [EXIT.

Enter Lord ALLCREST.

Lord A. Madam, I am sorry to find Mr. Beaumont is gone out : I had something of importance to communicate to him, but I believe it will be nearly the same thing if I impart it to you. I—I— (*seems embarrassed.*)—It is an unfortunate affair. As to myself, I have little to do with it ; but it is right that the near relations of Sir Anthony Seabright should know, that his salt scheme has entirely fail'd, and he is involved in utter ruin : they can communicate the dreadful tidings to him more properly than I can.

Mrs. B. We are obliged to you, my Lord : it is a piece of intelligence we have every day expected to hear, but which does not certainly concern us more nearly than yourself ; as I, who am Sir Anthony's connection, stand exactly in the same degree of relation to him with your Lordship.

Lord A. Yes ; my sister, indeed, would gratify very foolishly a foolish inclination — but it is a recent thing, scarcely to be consider'd as a — a — a — he had many children by your sister, and lived with her many years.

Miss. B. (smiling with great contempt.) I don't know, indeed, at what time, from the date of a man's marriage, he ought to claim affinity with his wife's relations : perhaps it varies with occurrences, and misfortunes certainly have no tendency to shorten it.

Lord A. Madam, let me have the honour to inform you, that there is no term in which the chief of a noble and ancient family can be contaminated by the inferior alliances of those individuals who belong to his family : such things are consider'd as mere adventitious circumstances.

Mrs. B. You teach me, my Lord, to make very nice distinctions; and therefore, whilst I pay all respect to you as the representative of a noble family, you must likewise permit me to express for you, as an individual, sentiments of a very opposite nature.

Lord A. Good breeding, madam, will not permit me to return such an answer as you deserve ; and therefore I will no longer intrude on your time.

Mrs. B. A better excuse, perhaps, might be found ; but any one will be perfectly acceptable that procures me the pleasure of wishing your Lordship good morning.

(As Lord Allcrest is about to go out, enter Beaumont and Morgan, and prevent him.)

Bea. I am sorry, my Lord, I was not in the way when you did me the honour to enquire for me.

Lord A. (passing him abruptly with a slight bow.)
Good morning, Sir ; good morning.

Bea. (going after him.) You are not going to leave me thus, my Lord, angry and disturb'd as you appear to be ? I cannot suffer any body, man, woman, or child, to leave me offended, if it be possible for me to part with them on more amicable terms. I flatter myself it is possible to do so on the present occasion : I am sure, — I am confident of it, if you will do me the honour to explain in what way I can be useful to you.

Lord A. I came here, Sir, upon no concerns of my own ; and the conversation I have had the honour to hold with this lady, makes any explanation of the business that brought me unnecessary.

Bea. But she is angry too, I perceive, and I will have no explanation from her. I know already the unfortunate affairs of poor Seabright ; and I can explain to myself the intention of your Lordship's visit : you must have the goodness to stay and hear if I explain it right. (*Taking him by the coat, and preventing him from going.*) Nay, nay, my Lord ! the spirit of charity and peace-making makes a well-meaning man very bold, — you shall stay.

Lord A. (relenting, and turning back.) I do believe, Mr. Beaumont, that you are a very good man, and as such I respect you ; but since you already know the misfortune of Sir Anthony Seabright, and will, from the dictates of your own good heart, open the matter to him in the best manner possible, my business with you is anticipated.

Mrs. B. Not, I believe, entirely, my Lord ; for he knows nothing at all, as yet, of those nice distinctions between individual and family relationship, which may be necessary to prevent him from forming any unreasonable expectations from a noble brother-in-law. I presume your Lordship means to hurry back to town again, without seeing Sir Anthony.

Bea. Hold your tongue, Susan ; your spirit is less mild than it ought to be, considering the warm good heart it belongs to. It is not so : his Lordship did not intend returning to town without seeing his distressed friend ; you are wrong in the very outset of your account — is she not, my Lord ?

Lord A. (*confused and hesitating.*) If my seeing him could be of any real service, I should never — I could not certainly have thought of returning without seeing him. — But he has never attended to my opinions : my advice has been disregarded — and then, his damn'd vanity : he refused an office the other day, which I had procured for him, that would have been a competency for life — it makes me mad to think of it.

Bea. Ah, my Lord ! he is in that state in which a man's errors should be remember'd only by himself : he is in adversity.

Lord A. He has thought only of himself, I'm sure.

Bea. His connection with your sister has indeed been unlucky ; and I can, in some degree, sympathize with your resentment.

THE SECOND MARRIAGE :

Lord A. You mistake me, Sir ; his connection with my sister is of no consequence to me ; and I shall take care that it shall be of as little to her as possible, for I will make her independent of him : but children ! — risking every thing on one single stake, with a family of children ! — I am provoked beyond all measure when I think of this.

Mrs. B. (bridling up.) His children, my Lord —

Bea. Now pray, my dear, hold your tongue, if it be possible ! We are weak, passionate creatures ; why should we rub and fret one another thus ? (*To Lord A.*) I praise you much, my Lord, for the interest you take in the children ; but here is a good man (*pointing to Morgan*) ; who will —

Mor. Stop, stop, my good friend, and don't now lead me into any discussion upon this subject. I am disturb'd, and uncomfortable, and unequal to it. Take his Lordship by himself ; and say to him what you please for me. (*To Mrs. B.*) Come with me, niece. [EXEUNT *Mor. and Mrs. B.*

Bea. Let me have the pleasure of attending your Lordship into the fields, where we can take a short turn or two, and speak of this subject at length : I see strangers arrived ; and it is noisy here.

Lord A. Most willingly.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE III.

SEABRIGHT'S house. *Enter SEABRIGHT, followed by SOPHIA, the Eldest Boy, and the Little Girl.*

Soph. Indeed, papa, you are in such good humour this morning, we can't help following you. I hope we are not troublesome ; if we are, I'll take the children away.

Sea. No, my good children, you are not troublesome ; you shan't go away. (*The children hang on his coat, and look up in his face much pleased.*)

Soph. They are so glad to hang upon you again, papa ; and you are so good-humour'd this morning !

Sea. I finish'd my papers last night ; and I have had some pleasant dreams too. — This is a cheerful, enlivening morning : every thing is in bright sunshine around us : it is like a day that wears good fortune on its face : — and, perhaps, it does.

Soph. I hope it does : and now that you seem so happy, papa, I would fain plead to you in behalf of a poor good man, who is not very happy at present.

Sea. And who is that ?

Soph. Ah, you know very well ; it is poor Robert. I know it was very wrong in him to frighten Lady Sarah ; but he meant it for our good, and he will break his heart if he is not allow'd to be with us again.

Sea. Say no more of this at present, Sophia ; and perhaps, by-and-bye, he may return to us again as your own servant.

Soph. Ha ! (*surprised.*)

Sea. Yes, my sweet girl ; I will be very liberal to you and to all my children : I will make a good amends to you for all that is past. (*Turning to the Boy.*) And you, my good boy, I must think of you by-and-bye. Thou art become a stout boy, George : let me look at thy face. (*Lifting up his hair from his forehead.*) Ay, it is a comely face enough : it will make a very good countenance for an admiral, or a general, or even for the woolsack, if thine inclinations should lead thee that way. Let me feel thy weight too, young rogue. (*Taking him up in his arms.*) Ah ! would now that I could but know the rank and eminence of the future man I hold in these arms !

Soph. My dear Sir, you are so good to us, and so good-humoured this morning, I could wager those letters by the post have brought you pleasant news.

Sea. Letters by the post ! I have received none.

Soph. Then you have not read them yet. You slept so much longer than usual this morning, that you were not up when they came, and they were put on the table in the next room. (*Pointing off the stage.*)

Sea. Let me see them, then ; if they bring me any good news, they are welcome.

[EXIT *with a light active step.*]

Soph. Now, children, did not I tell you yesterday that papa would love us again? and you see he has begun to do it already.

Boy. And so he does, Sophy; and I'm sorry I spoke so naughtily of him, for my heart jumps so when he loves me! (*Looking off the stage.*) But see! what is he about now, beating his forehead and walking up and down so strangely?

Soph. O dear! something is the matter.

[*EXIT, alarmed.*]

Boy. (*to little girl.*) Now don't ask me for those marbles at present, Emma: I can't find them, I don't know where they are. (*Looking off the stage again.*) O how terrible he looks!

(*Re-enter Seabright, with an open letter in his hand, beating his head with his clenched hands, and tossing about his arm distractedly, followed by Sophia, who seems frightened at him, and yet wishing to soothe him. A long pause, in which he paces up and down the stage followed by Sophia, whilst the children run into a corner, frightened, and stare at him.*)

Soph. (*after attempting in vain several times to speak.*) My father! my dear, dear father! (*He still paces up and down without heeding her.*) O if you would but speak two words, and tell what is the matter with you, my dear, dear Sir!

Sea. I am ruined, and deceived, and undone! I am a bankrupt and a beggar! — I have made beggars of you all!

Soph. O no, father! that won't be! for God's sake don't take on so violently!

Sea. (*still pacing up and down, followed by Soph.*) I am a bankrupt and a beggar! — disgrace, and ridicule, and contempt! — Ideot, ideot, ideot! O worse than ideot!

Soph. Dear father!

(*The children run, and take hold of Sophia, as she follows him.*)

Sea. Come not near me — come not near me, children — I have made beggars of you all!

Soph. But we will come near you, my dear father, and love you, and bless you, too, whatever you have done. Ay, and if we are beggars, we will beg with you, and beg for you cheerfully.

Sea. Oh, oh, oh! This is more than I can bear!

(*Throws himself into a chair, quite overcome, whilst the children stand gazing on him, and Sophia hangs over him affectionately.*)

Enter Lady SARAH.

Lady S. What are you doing here, children? — What is all this for? — What is the matter with you, Sir Anthony? — No answer at all? — What letter is this? (*Picks up the letter which Seabright had dropt in his agitation, and reads it; then breaking out violently.*) O, I told you it would come to this! — I counsell'd you — I warn'd you — I beseech'd you. O Sir Anthony! Sir Anthony! what devil tempted you to such madness as this?

Soph. Oh, madam, do not upbraid him! See how he is!

Lady S. I see how it is, well enough: the devil, the devil of ambition has tempted him.—(*Going nearer him with great vehemence.*) Did not I tell you that with prudence and management, and economy, we should in the end amass a good fortune? but you must be in such a hurry to get rich!—O it would get the better of a saint's spirit to think how I have saved, and regulated, and laid down rules for my household, and that it should all come to this!—To have watched, and toiled, and fretted as I have done, and all to no purpose!—If I did not begrudge the very food that was consumed in the family!—If I did not try all manner of receipts that the wife of the meanest citizen would scarcely have thought of!—If I did not go a bargain-hunting thro' every shop in London, and purchase damaged muslins even for my own wearing!—It is very hard—it is very hard, indeed. (*Bursting into tears.*) O it is enough to turn a woman's brains!

Sea. (*starting up in a rage.*) By heavens! madam, it is enough to turn a man's brains to think, that, in addition to the ruin I have brought upon myself and my children, I have taken to my bosom—I have set over their innocent heads, a hard-hearted, narrow, avaricious woman, whose meanness makes me contemptible, whose person and character I despise!—This, madam, the spirit of ambition, which you talk of, has tempted me to do; and for this, more than all his other malice, I will curse him!

Soph. (*endeavouring to soothe him.*) Pray be not so violent with her! she does not consider what she says — she did not intend to hurt you.

Lady S. Sir Anthony Seabright, you are a base man and a deceiver: my brother shall know how you have used me: he has made you a Member of Parliament and a Baronet.

Sea. Yes, and a contemptible fool, and a miserable wretch into the bargain. But, no, no, no! I have made myself so; I deserve my punishment. —

Enter Lord ALLCREST, BEAUMONT, MORGAN,
Mrs. B. and WILLIAM B.

And here are more of my advisers and beseechers come to visit me: advance, advance, good friends! you are come to look upon a ruined man, and you are gratified.

Bea. (*going up to him affectionately.*) No, my dear Seabright; in a very different spirit are we come: we come to sympathize with you, and to console you.

Sea. I hate sympathy, and I hate consolation! You are come, I suppose, to sympathize with me too, my Lord, and to put me in mind of the damn'd place I have given up to that knave Sir Crafty Supplecoat.

Lord A. No, Sir Anthony, I scorn to upbraid, but I pretend neither to sympathize with you nor to console you: I come to rescue my sister from a situation unworthy of a daughter of the house of Allcrest, and she shall go home with me.

Sea. Nay, by the sincerity of a miserable man, but you do console me. — 'Take her o' God's name! I received her not half so willingly as I resign her to you again. (*Taking Lady Sarah's hand to give her to her brother, which she pulls away from him angrily, and going up to Lord Allcrest, gives him her hand as an act of her own.*)

Lady S. If my brother will, indeed, have the goodness!

Boy. (*skipping joyfully.*) Sophy! sister Sophy! she is going away from us! is not that nice?

Soph. Hush, George!

Sea. (*to Mrs. B. on perceiving her smile to herself.*) Yes, madam, I make no doubt but all this is very amusing to you—you are also come, no doubt, to bestow upon me your contribution of friendly sympathy.

Mrs. B. Indeed, Sir Anthony, recollecting the happiness you have enjoyed, and the woman that shared it with you, you are entitled to no small portion of pity.

Bea. (*to Mrs. B.*) Fie upon it! fie upon it, Susan! can't you hold out your hand to him, and forgive him nobly, without tacking those little ungracious recollections to it? (*To Sea.*) Indeed, my dear Seabright, you look upon us all with the suspicious eye of an unfortunate man; but we are truly come to you in kindness and Christian simplicity; and we bring you comfort.

Sea. Yes, Beaumont, you come to me in simplicity. What comfort can you bring to me, ruined

as I am? all my fair prospects blasted! all my honours disgraced! sunk even to obscurity and contempt! you are indeed come in great simplicity.

Bea. What comfort can we bring you? does grandeur and riches include the whole of human happiness, that you should now feel yourself inconsolable and hopeless? Cannot a quiet, modest retreat, independent of the bustle of the world, still be a situation of comfort?

Sea. I know what you mean: contemptible, slothful obscurity.

Bea. You mistake me, Sir Anthony; respectable and useful privacy.

Sea. I understand you well enough: hopeless and without object — I abhor it!

Bea. What, Seabright! can a man with a family to grow up around him, be hopeless and without object? Come here, children, and speak for yourselves. (*He takes the children in his hands, and encouraging Sophia to come forward, they surround Seabright.*)

Soph. (*after endeavouring in vain to speak, and kissing her father's hand tenderly*). O my dear father! in the loneliest cottage in England I could be happy with you. I would keep it so neat and comfortable, and do every thing for you so willingly; and the children would be so good, if you would but love us enough to be happy with us!

Sea. (*catching her in his arms.*) Come to my heart, my admirable girl! thou truly hast found the way to it, and a stubborn unnatural heart it

has been. But I will love you all — yes, my children, I will love you enough to be happy with you. (*Pausing.*) I hope I shall—I think I shall.

Will. B. (eagerly.) Yes, you will! yes, you will; if there be one spark of a true man in your breast, you will love them to the last beat of your heart.

Bea. (smiling affectionately on his son.) Get away, stripling! your warmth interrupts us.

Sea. O no, let him speak! say all of you what you please to me now! say any thing that will break the current of my miserable thoughts; for we are at this moment indulging fancies as illusive as those that formerly misled me; even the cottage that we talk of, a peaceful home for my children, is no longer in my power.

Bea. (going up to Morgan.) Now, my friend, this is the time for you to step forth, and make a subdued father and his innocent children happy: bestow your wealth liberally, and the blessings that will fall upon your grey head shall well reward the toils and dangers that have earn'd it.

(*Leading him to Seabright.*)

Sea. Ha! what stranger is this? I observed him not before.

Bea. Speak for yourself now, Mr. Morgan, I will do no more for you.

Sea. Mr. Morgan, the uncle of my Caroline!

Mor. Yes, Sir Anthony, and very much disposed, if you will give him leave, to—to love—to befriend—to be to you and yours—to be the

uncle and friend of you all. (*Speaking in a broken agitated voice.*)

Sea. O no ! I am unworthy to receive any thing from you—from the uncle of my much-injured wife ; but these children, Mr. Morgan—I am not too proud to ask you to be a friend to them.

Bea. (*hastily to Sea.*) Poo, man ! you have no real goodness in you, if you cannot perceive that he must and will be a friend to yourself also. Come, come ! give him a hand of fellowship ! (*Putting Seabright's hand into Morgan's.*) Now, God will bless you both !

Mor. If Sir Anthony will permit an old man, who has past thro' many buffetings of fortune to draw his arm-chair by him in the evening of his life, and tell over the varied hardships he has met with, he will cheer its gloom, and make it pass more pleasantly. (*Sea. presses Morgan's hand to his breast without speaking.*)

Mrs. B. (*to Mor.*) Well said, and gracefully said, my good uncle ! Did not I tell you, you would go through your part well, if you would but trust to the dictates of your own good heart ?

Bea. O there is nobody, when he does what is noble and right, that does not find a way of doing it gracefully.

Mrs. B. (*to Sophia, who is going up timidly to Mor.*) Yes, that is right, my dear. Come, children, (*leading the children up to him,*) gather all about him. Yes, take hold of him ; don't be

afraid to touch him : it does young people good to pat the cheeks of a benevolent old man. (*Mor. embraces them affectionately.*)

Will. B. (*joining the children in caressing Mor.*)
—My dear Mr. Morgan, I love you with all my soul ! — And my sweet Sophy — my good Sophy, don't you love him too ? — She is such a good girl, Mr. Morgan !

Mor. So she is, William ; and she must have a good husband by-and-bye to reward her. I dare say we shall find somebody or other willing to have her. (*Smiling archly upon William, who looks abashed ; and letting go Sophy's hand, retires behind.*)

Sea. (*to Mor.*) I have now voice enough, my generous friend, to say that I am sensible of your goodness : but there are feelings which depress me —

Mor. Say no more about it, my good Sir ! I am happy, and I would have every body to rejoice with me.

Lord A. (*to Mor. leading forward Lady Sarah.*)
And every body does rejoice with you, my good Sir. Permit me to assure you, that tho', perhaps, somewhat injured with the ways of 'the world, I have not been an unfeeling spectator of what has passed ; and I believe Lady Sarah also has not looked upon it with indifference. (*Turning to Sea.*)
Now, Sir Anthony, I would, if possible, part friends with you ; and I have a favour to request, which will, if it is granted, make me forget every unpleasant thing that has passed between us.

Sea. Mention it, my Lord ; I will not willingly refuse you.

Lord A. My sister has just now told me, that she will leave you without regret, if you will let her have your youngest boy to live with her : I join my request to her's.

Boy. (eagerly.) What, take Tony away from us ! no, but she shan't tho' !

Sea. I am much obliged to you, my Lord, and to Lady Sarah also ; but I cannot find in my heart to divide my children. He shall, however, visit her frequently, if she will permit him ; and if she will have the goodness to forget the hasty words of a passionate man, and still take an interest in any thing that belongs to him, he will be gratified by it.

Soph. And I will visit Lady Sarah too, if she will have the goodness to permit me.

Lady S. I thank you, my dear ; it is, perhaps, more than I deserve. (*To Mrs. B.*) And may I hope, madam, that you will forget whatever unpleasant things may have passed between us ?

Bea. (interrupting his wife as she is about to speak.) Now answer her pleasantly, my dear Susan ! (*Mrs. B. smiles pleasantly, and gives her hand to Lady Sarah.*) Now every thing is right. O it is a pleasant thing to find that there is some good in every human being !

Enter a Servant, and whispers to Bea.

Is he here ? let him enter then.

Sea. Who is it ? I can see nobody now.

Bea. Don't be alarmed: it is a friend of yours, who has offended you, and takes a very proper season to be forgiven. It is one who durst not, in your prosperity, shew you the extent of his attachment; but he has now come, for he has already open'd his mind to me upon hearing of your misfortunes, to put into your hands, for the benefit of your children, all the little money he has saved, since he first began to lay up one mite after another, and to call it his own property.

Sea. Who can that be? I did not think there was a creature in the world that bore us so much affection.

Enter ROBERT, who starts back upon seeing so many people.

Bea. Come in, my good Robert: (*taking his hand and leading him forward,*) thou need'st not be ashamed to shew thy face here: there is nobody here who will not receive thee graciously, not even Lady Sarah herself.

(*The children and every body gather round Robert.*)

Sea. (*coming forward with Bea.*) Ah, my dear Beaumont, what a charm there is in doing good! it can give dignity to the meanest condition. Had this unlucky scheme but succeeded, for if we could have but weather'd it a little while longer it must have succeeded, I should have been — I think I should have been munificent as a prince.

Bea. Ah, no more of that, my dear friend! no more of that! such thoughts are dangerous, and the enemy is still at hand: chide the deceiver away from you, even when he makes his appearance in the fair form of Virtue.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

A
SERIES OF PLAYS:

IN WHICH
IT IS ATTEMPTED TO DELINEATE
THE
STRONGER PASSIONS OF THE MIND.

BY
JOANNA BAILLIE.

A NEW EDITION.

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TO THE READER.

AFTER an interval of nine years, I offer to the Public a third volume of the "Series of Plays;" hoping that it will be received, as the preceding volumes have been, with some degree of favour and indulgence. This, I confess, is making very slow progress in my promised undertaking; and I could offer some reasonable excuse for an apparent relaxation of industry, were I not afraid it might seem to infer a greater degree of expectation or desire, on the part of my Readers, to receive the remainder of the work, than I am at all entitled to suppose.

With the exception of a small piece, in two acts, at the end of the book, this volume is entirely occupied with different representations of one passion; and a passion, too, which has been supposed to be less adapted to dramatic purposes than any other — Fear. It has been thought that, in Tragedy at least, the principal character could not possibly be actuated by this passion, without becoming so far degraded as to be incapable of engaging the sympathy and interest of the spectator or reader. I am, how-

ever, inclined to think, that even Fear, as it is, under certain circumstances and to a certain degree, a universal passion, (for our very admiration of Courage rests upon this idea,) is capable of being made in the tragic drama, as it often is in real life, very interesting, and consequently not abject.

The first of these plays is a Tragedy of five acts, the principal character of which is a woman, under the dominion of Superstitious Fear; and that particular species of it, (the fear of ghosts, or the returning dead,) which is so universal and inherent in our nature, that it cannot ever be eradicated from the mind, let the progress of reason or philosophy be what it may. A brave and wise man of the 19th century, were he lodged for the night in a lone apartment where murder has been committed, would not so easily believe, as a brave and wise man of the 14th century, that the restless spirit from its grave might stalk round his bed and open his curtains in the stillness of midnight: but should circumstances arise to impress him with such a belief, he would feel the emotions of Fear as intensely, though firmly persuaded that such beings have no power to injure him. Nay, I am persuaded that, could we suppose any person with a mind so constituted as to hold intercourse with such beings entirely devoid of Fear, we should turn from him with repugnance as something unnatural—as an instance of mental monstrosity. If I am right, then, in believing

this impression of the mind to be so universal, I shall not be afraid of having so far infringed on the dignity of my heroine, as to make her an improper object to excite dramatic interest. Those, I believe, who possess strong imagination, quick fancy, and keen feeling, are most easily affected by this species of Fear: I have, therefore, made Orra a lively, cheerful, buoyant character, when not immediately under its influence; and even extracting from her superstitious propensity a kind of wild enjoyment, which tempts her to nourish and cultivate the enemy that destroys her. The catastrophe is such as Fear, I understand, does more commonly produce than any other passion. I have endeavoured to trace the inferior characters of the piece with some degree of variety, so as to stand relieved from the principal figure; but as I am not aware that any particular objection is likely to be made to any of them, they shall be left entirely to the mercy of my Reader.

But if it has been at all necessary to offer any apology for exhibiting Fear as the actuating principle of the heroine of the first play, what must I say in defence of a much bolder step in the one that follows it, in which I have made Fear, and the fear of Death too, the actuating principle of a hero of Tragedy. I can only say, that I believed it might be done without submitting him to any degradation that would affect the sympathy and interest I intended to excite. I must confess, however, that, being unwilling

to appropriate this passion in a serious form to my own sex entirely, when the subjects of all the other passions hitherto delineated in this series are men, I have attempted what did indeed appear at first sight almost impracticable. This *esprit de corps* must also plead my excuse for loading the passion in question with an additional play. The fear of Death is here exhibited in a brave character, placed under such new and appalling circumstances as might, I supposed, overcome the most courageous ; and as soon as he finds himself in a situation like those in which he has been accustomed to be bold, viz. with arms in his hand and an enemy to encounter, he is made immediately to resume all his wonted spirit. Even after he believes himself to be safe, he returns again to attack, in behalf of his companion, who beseeches him to fly, and who is not exposed to any personal danger, a force so greatly superior to his own as to leave himself scarcely a chance for redemption.

That great active courage in opposing danger, and great repugnance from passive endurance and unknown change which are independent of our exertions, are perfectly consistent, is a point, I believe, very well ascertained. Soldiers, who have distinguished themselves honourably in the field, have died pusillanimously on the scaffold ; while men brought up in peaceful habits, who, without some very strong excitement, would have marched with trepidation to

battle, have died under the hands of the executioner with magnanimous composure. And, I believe, it has been found by experience, that women have always behaved with as much resolution and calmness in that tremendous situation as men; although I do not believe that women, in regard to uncertain danger, even making allowance for their inferior strength and unfavourable habits of life, are so brave as men. I have therefore supposed that, though active and passive courage are often united, they frequently exist separately, and independently of each other. Nor ought we to be greatly surprised at this, when we consider that a man actively brave, when so circumstanced that no exertion of strength or boldness is of any avail, finds himself in a new situation, contrary to all former experience; and is therefore taken at greater disadvantage than men of a different character. He, who has less of that spirit which naturally opposes an enemy, and still hopes to overcome while the slightest probability remains of success, has often before, in imagination at least, been in a similar predicament, and is consequently better prepared for it. But it is not want of fortitude to bear bodily sufferings, or even deliberately inflicted death under the circumstances commonly attending it, that the character of Osterloo exhibits: it is the horror he conceives on being suddenly awakened to the imagination of the awful retributions of another world, from having the firm belief of them forced

at once upon his mind by extraordinary circumstances, which so miserably quells an otherwise undaunted spirit. I only contend for the consistency of brave men shrinking from passive sufferings and unknown change, to shew that, so far from transgressing, I have, in this character, kept much within the bounds which our experience of human nature would have allowed me. If I am tediously anxious to vindicate myself on this subject, let my Reader consider that I am urged to it from the experience I have had of the great reluctance with which people generally receive characters which are not drawn agreeably to the received rules of dramatic dignity and common-place heroism.

It may be objected, that the fear of Death is in him so closely connected with Superstitious Fear, that the picture traced in this play bears too near a resemblance to that which is shewn in the foregoing. But the fears of Orra have nothing to do with apprehension of personal danger, and spring solely from a natural horror of supernatural intercourse: while those of Osterloo arise, as I have already noticed, from a strong sense of guilt, suddenly roused within him by extraordinary circumstances, and the prospect of being plunged almost immediately by death into an unknown state of punishment and horror. Not knowing by what natural means his guilt could be brought to light in a manner so extraordinary, a mind the least superstitious, in those days, perhaps I may even say in these, would

have considered it to be supernatural; and the dreadful consequences, so immediately linked to it, are surely sufficiently strong to unhinge the firmest mind, having no time allowed to prepare itself for the tremendous change. If there is any person, who, under such circumstances, could have remained unappalled, he does not belong to that class of men, who, commanding the fleets and armies of their grateful and admiring country, dare every thing by flood and by field that is dangerous and terrific for her sake; but to one far different, whom hard drinking, opium, or impiety, have sunk into a state of unmanly and brutish stupidity. It will probably be supposed that I have carried the consequences of his passion too far in the catastrophe to be considered as natural; but the only circumstance in the piece that is not entirely invention, is the catastrophe. The idea of it I received from a story told to me by my mother, many years ago, of a man condemned to the block, who died in the same manner; and since the play has been written, I have had the satisfaction of finding it confirmed by a circumstance very similar, related in Miss Plumtre's interesting account of the atrocities committed in Lyons by the revolutionary tribunals.*

The story of the piece is imaginary, though one of its principal circumstances, by a coincidence somewhat whimsical, I found after it was

* Plumtre's Residence in France, vol. i. p. 339.

written to agree with real history. In looking over Planta's History of Switzerland, I found that a violent pestilence, about the time when I have supposed it to happen, did actually carry off great multitudes of people in that country.* Had it been a real story, handed down by tradition, the circumstances of which were believed to be miraculous, I should have allowed it to remain so ; but not thinking myself entitled to assume so much, I have attempted to trace a natural connection from association of ideas, by which one thing produces another, or is insinuated to have done so from beginning to end. The only circumstance that cannot be accounted for on this principle, is the falling of the lot to the guilty hand ; and this must be conceded to me as a providential direction, or happy coincidence.

* A plague raged in Switzerland in 1349. It was preceded by terrible earthquakes : about a third part of the inhabitants were destroyed.

The monastery of St. Maurice, where the story of the play is supposed to have happened, is situated in a narrow pass between lofty precipices, where the Rhone gushes from the Valais. The founder was Segismond, King of Burgundy. It was richly endowed ; the monks at one period leading very luxurious lives, hunting, and keeping hounds, &c. It was dedicated to St. Maurice and his companions, the holy martyrs of the Theban Legion.

Many of the abbots and priors in Switzerland were, in those days, feudal lords of the empire, and maintained troops of their own. Even some of the abbesses, presiding over convents of nuns, were possessed of the same power and privilege.

Contrary to our established laws of Tragedy, this Play consists only of three acts, and is written in prose. I have made it short, because I was unwilling to mix any lighter matter with a subject so solemn ; and in extending it to the usual length without doing so, it would have been in danger of becoming monotonous and harassing. I have written it in prose, that the expressions of the agitated person might be plain, though strong, and kept as closely as possible to the simplicity of nature. Such a subject would, I believe, have been weakened, not enriched, by poetical embellishment. Whether I am right or wrong in this opinion, I assure my Reader it has not been indolence that has tempted me to depart from common rules.

A Comedy on Fear, the chief character being a man, is not liable to the objections I have supposed might be made to a Tragedy under the same circumstances. But a very great degree of constitutional cowardice would have been a picture too humiliating to afford any amusement, or even to engage the attention for any considerable time. The hero of my third Play, therefore, is represented as timid indeed, and endeavouring to conceal it by a boastful affectation of gallantry and courage ; but at the same time worked upon by artful contrivances to believe himself in such a situation as would have miserably overcome many a one, who, on ordinary occasions of danger, would have behaved with decorum. Cowardice in him has been

cultivated by indulgence of every kind: and self-conceit and selfishness are the leading traits of his character, which might have been originally trained to useful and honourable activity. Fear, in a mixed character of this kind, is, I apprehend, a very good subject for Comedy, and in abler hands would certainly have proved itself to be so.

The last Play in the volume is a drama of two acts, the subject of which is Hope. This passion, when it acts permanently, loses the character of a passion; and when it acts violently, is, like Anger, Joy, or Grief, too transient to become the subject of a piece of any length. It seemed to me, in fact, neither fit for Tragedy nor Comedy; and like Anger, Joy, or Grief, I once thought to have left it out of my Series altogether. However, what it wanted in strength, it seemed to have in grace; and being of a noble, kindly, and engaging nature, it drew me to itself; and I resolved to do every thing for it that I could, in spite of the objections which had at first deterred me. The piece is very short, and can neither be called Tragedy nor Comedy. It may indeed appear, for a passion so much allied to all our cheerful and exhilarating thoughts, to approach too nearly to the former; but Hope, when its object is of great importance, must so often contend with despondency, that it rides like a vessel on the stormy ocean, rising on the billow's ridge but

for a moment. Cheerfulness, the character of common Hope, is, in strong Hope, like glimpses of sunshine in a cloudy sky.

As this passion, though more pleasing, is not so powerfully interesting as those that are more turbulent, and was therefore in danger of becoming languid and tiresome, if long dwelt upon without interruption ; and at the same time of being sunk into shade or entirely overpowered, if relieved from it by variety of strong marked characters in the inferior persons of the drama, I have introduced into the scenes several songs. So many, indeed, that I have ventured to call it a Musical Drama. I have, however, avoided one fault so common, I might say universal, in such pieces, viz. making people sing in situations in which it is not natural for them to do so ; and creating a necessity for either having the first characters performed by those who can both act and sing, (persons very difficult to find,) or permitting them to be made entirely insipid and absurd. For this purpose, the songs are all sung by those who have little or nothing to act, and introduced when nothing very interesting is going on. They are also supposed not to be spontaneous expressions of sentiment in the singer, but (as songs in ordinary life usually are) compositions of other people, which have been often sung before, and are only generally applicable to the present occasion.

The story is imaginary, but I have endeavoured to make it, as far as my information

enabled me to correspond with the circumstances of the time and place in which it is supposed to have happened.

Having said all that appears to me necessary in regard to the contents of the volume, I should now leave my reader to peruse it without further hinderance; but as this will probably be the last volume of Plays I shall ever publish, I must beg to detain him a few moments longer. For I am inclined to think, he may have some curiosity to know what is the extent of my plan in a task I have so far fulfilled; and I shall satisfy it most cheerfully. It is my intention, if I live long enough, to add to this work the passions of Remorse, Jealousy, and Revenge. Joy, Grief, and Anger, as I have already said, are generally of too transient a nature, and are too frequently the attendants of all our other passions to be made the subjects of an entire play. And though this objection cannot be urged in regard to Pride and Envy, two powerful passions which I have not yet named, Pride would make, I should think, a dull subject, unless it were merely taken as the ground-work of more turbulent passions; and Envy, being that state of mind, which, of all others, meets with least sympathy, could only be endured in Comedy or Farce, and would become altogether disgusting in Tragedy. I have besides, in some degree, introduced this latter passion into the work already, by making it a companion or rather a component part of Hatred. Of all our passions, Remorse

and Jealousy appear to me to be the best fitted for representation. If this be the case, it is fortunate for me that I have reserved them for the end of my task; and that they have not been already published, read, and very naturally laid aside as unfit for the stage, because they have not been produced upon it.

My Reader may likewise wish to know why, having so many years ago promised to go on publishing this work, I should now intend to leave it off, though I still mean to continue writing till it shall be compleated; and this supposed wish I think myself bound to gratify. — The Series of Plays was originally published in the hope that some of the pieces it contains, although first given to the Public from the press, might in time make their way to the stage, and there be received and supported with some degree of public favour. But the present situation of dramatic affairs is greatly against every hope of this kind; and should they ever become more favourable, I have now good reason to believe, that the circumstance of these plays having been already published would operate strongly against their being received upon the stage. I am therefore strongly of opinion that I ought to reserve the remainder of the work in manuscript, if I would not run the risk of entirely frustrating my original design. Did I believe that their having been already published would not afterwards obstruct their way to the stage, the untowardness of present circumstances

should not prevent me from continuing to publish.

Having thus given an account of my views and intentions regarding this work, I hope that, should no more of it be published in my lifetime, it will not be supposed I have abandoned or become weary of my occupation, which is in truth as interesting and pleasing to me now as it was at the beginning.

But when I say, present circumstances are unfavourable for the reception of these Plays upon the stage, let it not be supposed that I mean to throw any reflection upon the prevailing taste for dramatic amusements. The Public have now to chuse between what we shall suppose are well-written and well-acted Plays, the words of which are not heard, or heard but imperfectly by two thirds of the audience, while the finer and more pleasing traits of the acting are by a still greater proportion lost altogether; and splendid pantomime, or pieces whose chief object is to produce striking scenic effect, which can be seen and comprehended by the whole. So situated, it would argue, methinks, a very pedantic love indeed for what is called legitimate Drama, were we to prefer the former. A love for active, varied movement, in the objects before us; for striking contrasts of light and shadow; for splendid decorations and magnificent scenery, is as inherent in us as the interest we take in the representation of the natural passions and characters of men: and the most

cultivated minds may relish such exhibitions, if they do not, when both are fairly offered to their choice, prefer them. Did our ears and our eyes permit us to hear and see distinctly in a Theatre so large as to admit of chariots and horsemen, and all the “pomp and circumstance of war,” I see no reason why we should reject them. They would give variety, and an appearance of truth to the scenes of heroic Tragedy, that would very much heighten its effect. We ought not then to find fault with the taste of the Public for preferring an inferior species of entertainment, good of its kind, to a superior one, faintly and imperfectly given.

It has been urged, as a proof of this supposed bad taste in the Public, by one whose judgment on these subjects is and ought to be high authority, that a play, possessing considerable merit, was produced some years ago on Drury-Lane stage, and notwithstanding the great support it received from excellent acting and magnificent decoration, entirely failed. It is very true that, in spite of all this, it failed, during the eight nights it continued to be acted, to produce houses sufficiently good to induce the Managers to revive it afterwards. But it ought to be acknowledged, that that piece had defects in it as an acting play, which served to counterbalance those advantages; and likewise that, if any supposed merit in the writing ought to have redeemed those defects, in a Theatre, so large

and so ill calculated to convey sound as the one in which it was performed, it was impossible this could be felt or comprehended by even a third part of the audience.

The size of our theatres then is what I chiefly allude to when I say, present circumstances are unfavourable for the production of these Plays. While they continue to be of this size, it is a vain thing to complain either of want of taste in the Public, or want of inclination in Managers to bring forward new pieces of merit, taking it for granted that there are such to produce. Nothing can be truly relished by the most cultivated audience that is not distinctly heard and seen, and Managers must produce what will be relished. Shakespeare's Plays, and some of our other old Plays, indeed, attract full houses, though they are often repeated, because, being familiar to the audience, they can still understand and follow them pretty closely, though but imperfectly heard; and surely this is no bad sign of our public taste. And besides this advantage, when a piece is familiar to the audience, the expression of the actors' faces is much better understood, though seen imperfectly; for the stronger marked traits of feeling which even in a large theatre may reach the eyes of a great part of the audience, from the recollection of finer and more delicate indications, formerly seen so delightfully mingled with them in the same countenances during the same

passages of the Play, will, by association, still convey them to the mind's eye, though it is the mind's eye only which they have reached.

And this thought leads me to another defect in large theatres, that ought to be considered.

Our great tragic actress, Mrs. Siddons, whose matchless powers of expression have so long been the pride of our stage, and the most admired actors of the present time, have been brought up in their youth in small theatres, where they were encouraged to enter thoroughly into the characters they represented, and to express in their faces that variety of fine fleeting emotion which nature in moments of agitation assumes, and the imitation of which we are taught by nature to delight in. But succeeding actors will only consider expression of countenance as addressed to an audience removed from them to a greater distance, and will only attempt such strong expression as can be perceived and have effect at a distance. It may easily be imagined what exaggerated expression will then get into use; and I should think, even this strong expression will not only be exaggerated but false: for, as we are enabled to assume the outward signs of passion, not by mimicking what we have beheld in others, but by internally assuming, in some degree, the passion itself; a mere outline of it cannot, I apprehend, be given as an outline of figure frequently is, where all that is delineated is true, though the whole is not filled up. Nay, besides having it exaggerated and false, it will

perpetually be thrust in where it ought not to be. For real occasions of strong expression not occurring often enough, and weaker being of no avail, to avoid an apparent barrenness of countenance, they will be tempted to introduce it where it is not wanted, and thereby destroy its effect where it is. — I say nothing of expression of voice, to which the above observations obviously apply. This will become equally, if not in a greater degree, false and exaggerated, in actors trained from their youth in a large theatre.

But the department of acting that will suffer most under these circumstances, is that which particularly regards the gradually unfolding of the passions, and has, perhaps, hitherto been less understood than any other part of the art — I mean Soliloquy. What actor in his senses will then think of giving to the solitary musing of a perturbed mind, that muttered, imperfect articulation, which grows by degrees into words; that heavy, suppressed voice, as of one speaking through sleep; that rapid burst of sounds which often succeeds the slow languid tones of distress; those sudden, untuned exclamations, which, as if frightened at their own discord, are struck again into silence as sudden and abrupt, with all the corresponding variety of countenance that belongs to it; — what actor, so situated, will attempt to exhibit all this? No; he will be satisfied, after taking a turn or two across the front of the stage, to place himself directly in

the middle of it; and there, spreading out his hands, as if he were addressing some person whom it behoved him to treat with great ceremony, to tell to himself, in an audible, uniform voice, all the secret thoughts of his own heart. When he has done this, he will think, and he will think rightly, that he has done enough.

The only valuable part of acting that will then remain to us, will be expression of gesture, grace, and dignity, supposing that these also shall not become affected by being too much attended to and studied.

It may be urged against such apprehensions, that, though the theatres of the metropolis should be large, they will be supplied with actors who have been trained to the stage in small country theatres. An actor of ambition (and all actors of genius are such) will practise with little heart in the country what he knows will be of no use to him on a London stage; not to mention that the style of acting in London will naturally be the fashionable and prevailing style elsewhere. Acting will become a less respectable profession than it has continued to be from the days of Garrick; and the few actors who add to the natural advantages requisite to it, the accomplishments of a scholar and a gentleman, will soon be wed away by the hand of time, leaving nothing of the same species behind them to spring from a neglected and sapless root.

All I have said on this subject may still in a greater degree be applied to actresses ; for the features and voice of a woman being naturally more delicate than those of a man, she must suffer in proportion from the defects of a large theatre.

The great disadvantage of such over-sized buildings to natural and genuine acting, is, I believe, very obvious ; but they have other defects which are not so readily noticed, because they in some degree run counter to the common opinion of their great superiority in every thing that regards general effect. The diminutive appearance of individual figures, and the straggling poverty of grouping, which unavoidably takes place when a very wide and lofty stage is not filled by a great number of people, is very injurious to general effect. This is particularly felt in Comedy, and all plays on domestic subjects ; and in those scenes also of the grand drama, where two or three persons only are produced at a time. To give figures who move upon it proper effect, there must be depth as well as width of stage ; and the one must bear some proportion to the other, if we would not make every closer or more confined scene appear like a section of a long passage, in which the actors move before us, apparently in one line, like the figures of a magic lanthorn.

It appears to me, that when a stage is of such a size that as many persons as generally come

into action at one time in our grandest and best-peopled plays, can be produced on the front of it in groups, without crowding together more than they would naturally do any where else for the convenience of speaking to one another, all is gained in point of general effect that can well be gained. When modern gentlemen and ladies talk to one another in a spacious saloon, or when ancient warriors and dames conversed together in an old baronial hall, they do not, and did not stand further apart than when conversing in a room of common dimensions; neither ought they to do so on the stage. All width of stage, beyond what is convenient for such natural grouping, is lost; and worse than lost, for it is injurious. It is continually presenting us with something similar to that which always offends us in a picture, where the canvass is too large for the subject; or in a face, where the features are too small for the bald margin of cheeks and forehead that surrounds them.

Even in the scenes of professed show and spectacle, where nothing else is considered, it appears to me that a very large stage is in some degree injurious to general effect. Even when a battle is represented in our theatres, the great width of the stage is a disadvantage; for as it never can nor ought to be represented but partially, and the part which is seen should be crowded and confused, opening a large front betrays your want of numbers; or should you be rich enough in this respect to fill it sufficiently,

imposes upon you a difficulty seldom surmounted, viz. putting the whole mass sufficiently in action to sustain the deception.* When a moderate number of combatants, so as to make one connected groupe, are fighting on the front of a moderately wide stage, which they sufficiently occupy, it is an easy thing, through the confusion of their brandished weapons and waving banners, to give the appearance of a deep active battle beyond them, seen, as it were, through a narrow pass; and beholding all the tumult of battle in the small view opened before us, our imagination supplies what is hid. If we open a wider view, we give the imagination less to do, and supply what it would have done less perfectly. In narrowing our battle, likewise, we could more easily throw smoke or an appearance

* The objections above do not apply to scenes where sieges are represented; for then the more diminished the actors appear, the greater is the importance and magnitude given to the walls or castle which they attack, while the towers and buttresses, &c. sufficiently occupy the width and height of the stage, and conceal the want of numbers and general activity in the combatants. And the managers of our present large theatre have, in my opinion, shewn great judgment in introducing into their mixed pieces of late so many good scenes of this kind, that have, to my fancy at least, afforded a grand and animating show. Nor do they fairly apply to those combats or battles into which horses are introduced; for a moderate number of those noble animals may be made to occupy and animate, in one connected groupe, the front of the widest stage that we are in danger of having, and to conceal the want of a numerous host and tumultuous battle behind them.

of dust over the back ground, and procure for our fancy an unlimited space.

In processions, also, the most pleasing effect to our imaginations is, when the marshalled figures are seen in long perspective, which requires only depth of stage; and the only advantage a wide stage has on such occasions is containing the assembled mass of figures, when the moving line stops and gathers itself together on the front. The rich confusion of such a crowd is indeed very brilliant and pleasing for a short time, but it is dearly purchased at the price of many sacrifices.

On those occasions too, when many people are assembled on the front of the stage to give splendour and importance to some particular scene, or to the conclusion of a piece, the general effect is often injured by great width of stage: for the crowd is supposed to be attracted to the spot by something which engages their attention; and, as they must not surround this object of attention, (which would be their natural arrangement,) lest they should conceal it from the audience, they are obliged to spread themselves out in a long straight line on each side of it: now the shorter those lines or wings are spreading out from the centre figures, the less do they offend against natural arrangement, and the less artificial and formal does the whole scene appear.

In short, I scarcely know of any advantage which a large stage possesses over one of a mo-

derate size, without great abatements, even in regard to general effect, unless it be when it is empty, and scenery alone engages our attention, or when figures appear at a distance on the back ground only. Something in confirmation of what I have been saying has perhaps been felt by most people on entering a grand cathedral, where figures moving in the long aisles at a distance add grandeur to the building by their diminished appearance; but in approaching near enough to become themselves distinct objects of attention, look stunted and mean, without serving to enlarge by comparison its general dimensions.

There is also, I apprehend, greater difficulty, in a very wide and lofty stage, to produce variety of light and shadow; and this often occasions the more solemn scenes of Tragedy to be represented in a full, staring, uniform light that ought to be dimly seen in twilight uncertainty; or to have the objects on them shewn by partial gleams only, while the deepened shade around gives a sombre indistinctness to the other parts of the stage, particularly favourable to solemn or terrific impressions. And it would be more difficult, I imagine, to throw down light upon the objects on such a stage, which I have never indeed seen attempted in any theatre, though it might surely be done in one of moderate dimensions with admirable effect. In short, a great variety of pleasing effects from light and shadow might be more easily produced on a

smaller stage, that would give change and even interest to pieces otherwise monotonous and heavy ; and would often be very useful in relieving the exhausted strength of the chief actors, while want of skill in the inferior could be craftily concealed.* On this part of the subject, however, I speak with great diffidence, not knowing to what perfection machinery for the management of light may be brought in a large theatre. But at the same time, I am certain that, by a judicious use of light and scenery, an artificial magnitude may be given to a stage of a moderate size, that would, to the eye, as far as distance in perspective is concerned, have an effect almost equal to any thing that can be produced on a larger stage : for that apparent magnitude, arising from succession of objects, depends upon the depth of the stage, much more than its width and loftiness, which are often detrimental to it ; and a small or moderate sized theatre may have, without injury to proportion, a very deep stage.

It would be, I believe, impertinent to pursue this subject any farther ; and I beg pardon for having obtruded it so far, where it may not appear naturally to be called for. I plead in my excuse an almost irresistible desire to express my thoughts, in some degree, upon what has occupied them considerably ; and a strong persuasion that I ought not, how unimportant soever they may be, entirely to conceal them.

* See Note at the end.

I must now beg leave to return my thanks to the public for that indulgent favour which for so many years has honoured and cheered my labour ; and whether more or less liberally dealt to me, has at all times been sufficient to prevent me from laying down my pen in despair. Favour, which has gratified me the more sensibly, because I have shared it with cotemporary writers of the highest poetic genius, whose claims to such distinction are so powerful.

NOTE.

THAT strong light cast up from lamps on the front of the stage which has long been in use in all our theatres, is certainly very unfavourable to the appearance and expression of individual actors, and also to the general effect of their grouped figures. When a painter wishes to give intelligence and expression to a face, he does not make his lights hit upon the under part of his chin, the nostrils, and the under curve of the eye-brows, turning of course all the shadows upwards. He does the very reverse of all this; that the eye may look hollow and dark under the shade of its brow; that the shadow of the nose may shorten the upper lip, and give a greater character of sense to the mouth; and that any fulness of the under chin may be the better concealed. From this disposition of the light in our theatres, whenever an actor, whose features are not particularly sharp and pointed, comes near the front of the stage, and turns his face fully to the audience, every feature immediately becomes shortened and snub, and less capable of any expression, unless it be of the ludicrous kind. This at least will be the effect produced to those who are seated under or on the same level with the stage, making now a considerable proportion of an audience; while to those who sit above it, the lights and shadows, at variance with the natural bent of the features, will make the whole face appear confused, and (compared to what it would have been with light thrown upon it from another direction) unintelligible. — As to the general effect of grouped figures: close groupes or crowds, ranged on the front of the stage, when the light is thrown up upon them, have a harsh flaring appearance; for the foremost figures catch the light, and are too much distinguished from those behind, from whom it is intercepted. But when the light is thrown down upon the objects, this cannot be the case: for then it will glance along the heads of the whole crowd, even to the very bottom of the stage, presenting a varied harmonious mass of figures to the eye, deep, mellow, and brilliant.

It may, perhaps, be objected to these last observations, that the most popular of our night-scenes in nature, and those which have been most frequently imitated by the painter, are groupes of figures with strong light thrown up upon them, such as gypsies or banditti round a fire, or villagers in a smith's forge, &c. But the striking and pleasing effect of such scenes is owing to the deep darkness which surrounds them; while the ascending smoke, tinged with flame-colour in the one case, and the rafters or higher parts of the wall catching a partial gleam in the other, connect the brilliant colouring of the figures with the deep darkness behind them, which would else appear hard and abrupt, and thus at the same time produce strong contrast with harmonious gradation. I need scarcely mention, for it is almost too obvious, that the effect of the light so thrown on the faces of those figures abundantly confirm my first observations, regarding the features and expression of individuals' faces. Yet I do not mean to say that light thrown up from the front of a stage, where light is also admitted from many other quarters, can have so strong an effect upon the countenances as in such situations.

Groupes of gypsies, &c. are commonly composed but of one circle of figures; for did they amount to any thing like a deepened groupe or crowd, the figures behind would be almost entirely lost. But those grand night-scenes containing many figures which we admire in nature or in painting, — processions by torch-light or in an illuminated street, — crowds gathered to behold a conflagration, &c. always have the light thrown down upon them. — It may be urged, indeed, that the greater part of our stage-scenes are meant to represent day and not night, so that the observations above are but partially applicable. It is very true that stage-scenes generally are supposed to be seen by day-light; but day-light comes from heaven, not from the earth; even within-doors our whitened ceilings are made to throw down reflected light upon us, while our pavements and carpets are of a darker colour.

In what way this great defect of all our theatres could be rectified, I am not at all competent to say. Yet, I should

suppose, that by bringing forward the roof of the stage as far as its boards or floor, and placing a row of lamps with reflectors along the inside of the wooden front-piece, such a light as is wanted might be procured. The green curtain in this case behoved not to be let down, as it now is, from the front-piece, but some feet within it; and great care taken that nothing should be placed near the lamps capable of catching fire. If this were done, no boxes, I suppose, could be made upon the stage; but the removal of stage-boxes would in itself be a great advantage. The front-piece at the top; the boundary of the stage from the orchestra at the bottom; and the pilasters on each side, would then represent the frame of a great moving picture, entirely separated and distinct from the rest of the theatre: whereas, at present, an unnatural mixture of audience and actors, of house and stage takes place near the front of the stage, which destroys the general effect in a very great degree.

O R R A:

A TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

HUGHOBERT, *Count of Aldenberg.*

GLOTTENBAL, *his Son.*

THEOBALD OF FALKENSTEIN, *a Nobleman of reduced Fortune, and Co-burgher of Basle.*

RUDIGERE, *a Knight, and Commander of one of the Free Companies returned from the Wars, and Bastard of a Branch of the Family of Aldenberg.*

HARTMAN, *friend of Theobald, and Banneret of Basle.*

URSTON, *a Confessor.*

FRANKO, *Chief of a Band of Outlaws.*

MAURICE, *an Agent of Rudigere's.*

Soldiers, Vassals, Outlaws, &c.

WOMEN.

ORRA, *Heiress of another Branch of the Family of Aldenberg, and Ward to Hughobert.*

ELEANORA, *Wife to Hughobert.*

CATHRINA, } *Ladies attending on Orra.*
ALICE, }

Scene, Switzerland, in the Canton of Basle, and afterwards in the Borders of the Black Forest in Suabia.

Time, towards the end of the 14th Century.

O R R A.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *An open Space before the Walls of a Castle, with wild Mountains beyond it ; enter GLOTTENBAL, armed as from the Lists, but bare-headed and in Disorder, and his Arms soiled with Earth or Sand, which an Attendant is now and then brushing off, whilst another follows bearing his Helmet ; with him enters MAURICE, followed by RUDIGERE, who is also armed, and keeps by himself, pacing to and fro at the bottom of the Stage, whilst the others come forward.*

GLOTTENBAL (*speaking as he enters, loud and boastingly.*)

AYE, let him triumph in his paltry honours,
Won by mere trick and accident. Good faith!
It were a shame to call it strength or skill.
Were it not, Rudigere ?

(*Calling to Rudigere, who answers not.*)

Maur. His brow is dark, his tongue is lock'd,
my Lord ;

There come no words from him ; he bears it not
So manfully as thou dost, noble Glottenbal.

Glott. Fy on't ! I mind it not.

Maur. And wherefore should'st thou? This
 same Theobald,
 Count and co-burgher — mixture most unseemly
 Of base and noble, — know we not right well
 What powers assist him? Mark'd you not, my
 Lord,
 How he did turn him to the witchy north,
 When first he mounted; making his fierce steed,
 That paw'd and rear'd and shook its harness'd
 neck

In generous pride, bend meekly to the earth
 Its mained crest, like one who made obeisance?

Glott. Ha! did'st thou really see it?

Maur. Yes, brave Glottenbal,
 I did right truly; and besides myself,
 Many observ'd it.

Glott. Then 'tis manifest
 How all this foil hath been. Who e'er before
 Saw one with such advantage of the field,
 Lose it so shamefully? By my good fay!
 Barring foul play and other dev'lish turns,
 I'd keep my courser's back with any Lord,
 Or Knight, or Squire that e'er bestrode a steed.
 Think'st thou not, honest Maurice, that I could?

Maur. Who doubts it, good my Lord? This
 Falkenstein
 Is but a clown to you.

Glott. Well let him boast.
 Boasting I scorn; but I will shortly shew him
 What these good arms, with no foul play against
 them,
 Can honestly atchieve.

Maur. Yes, good my Lord ; but chuse you
 well your day :
 A moonless Friday luck did never bring
 To honest combatant.

Glott. Ha ! blessing on thee ! I ne'er thought
 of this :

Now it is clear how our mischance befell.
 Be sure thou tell to every one thou meet'st,
 Friday and a dark moon suit Theobald.
 Ho there ! Sir Rudigere ! hear'st thou not this ?

Rud. (*as he goes off, aside to Maurice*)
 Flatter the fool a while and let me go,
 I cannot join thee now. [EXIT.

Glott. (*looking after Rudigere*)
 Is he so crest-fallen ?

Maur. He lacks your noble spirit.

Glott. Fy upon't !
 I heed it not. Yet, by my sword and spurs !
 'Twas a foul turn, that for my rival earn'd
 A branch of victory from Orra's hand.

Maur. Aye, foul indeed ! My blood boil'd
 high to see it.
 Look where he proudly comes.

*Enter THEOBALD arm'd, with Attendants, having
 a green sprig stuck in his helmet.*

Glott. (*going up to THEOBALD*)
 Comest thou to face me so ? Audacious Burgher !
 The Lady Orra's favour suits thee not,
 Tho' for a time thou hast upon me gain'd
 A seeming 'vantage.

Theo. A seeming 'vantage !—Then it is not true,
 That thou, unhors'd, layd'st rolling in the dust,

Asking for quarter? — Let me crave thy pardon ;
Some strange delusion hung upon our sight
That we believed it so.

Glott. Off with thy taunts !
And pull that sprig from its audacious perch :
The favour of a Dame too high for thee.

Theo. Too high indeed ; and had'st thou also
added,
Too good, too fair, I had assented to it.
Yet, be it known unto your courteous worth,
That were this sprig a Queen's gift, or received
From the brown hand of some poor mountain
maid ;
Yea, or bestow'd upon my rambling head,
As in the hairy sides of brouzing kid
The wild rose sticks a spray, unprized, unbidden,
I would not give it thee.

Glott. Dost thou so face me out? Then I
will have it. (*Snatching at it with rage.*)

Enter HARTMAN.

Hart. (*separating them*)
What ! Malice ! after fighting in the lists
As noble courteous knights !

Glott. (*to Hartman*) Go, paltry Banneret !
Such friends as thou
Become such Lords as he, whose ruined state
Seeks the base fellowship of restless burghers ;
Thinking to humble still, with envious spite,
The great and noble houses of the land.
I know ye well, and I defy you both,
With all your damned witchery to-boot,
[EXIT grumbling, followed by Maurice, &c.]

Manent Theobald and Hartman.

Theo. How fierce the creature is, and full of folly !

Like a shent cur to his own door retired,
That bristles up his furious back, and there
Each passenger annoys. — And this is he,
Whom sordid and ambitious Hughobert,
The guardian in the selfish father sunk,
Destines for Orra's husband. — O foul shame !
The carrion-crow and royal eagle join'd,
Make not so cross a match. — But think'st thou,
Hartman,
She will submit to it ?

Hart. That may be as thou pleasest, Falkenstein.

Theo. Away with mockery !

Hart. I mock thee not.

Theo. Nay, Banneret, thou dost. Saving this favour,

Which every victor in these listed combats
From Ladies' hands receive, nor then regard
As more than due and stated courtesy,
She ne'er hath honour'd me with word or look
Such hope to warrant.

Hart. Wait not thou for looks.

Theo. Thou would'st not have me to a Dame
like this,

With rich domains and titled rights encompass'd,
These simple limbs, girt in their soldier's gear,
My barren hills and ruin'd tower present,
And say, " Accept — these will I nobly give
In fair exchange for thee and all thy wealth."

No, Rudolph, Hartman, woo the maid thyse lf,
If thou hast courage for it.

Hart. Yes, Theobald of Falkenstein, I will,
And win her too ; but all for thy behoof.
And when I do present, as thou hast said,
Those simple limbs, girt in their soldier's geer,
Adding thy barren hills and ruin'd tower,
With some few items more of gen'rous worth
And native sense and manly fortitude,
I'll give her in return for all that she
Or any maid can in such barter yield,
Its fair and ample worth.

Theo. So dost thou reckon.

Hart. And so will Orra. Do not shake thy
head.

I know the maid : for still she has received me
As one who knew her noble father well,
And in the bloody field in which he died
Fought by his side with kind familiarity :
And her stern guardian, viewing these grey hairs
And this rough visage with no jealous eye,
Hath still admitted it. ——— I'll woo her for
thee.

Theo. I do in truth believe thou mean'st me
well.

Hart. And this is all thou say'st? Cold frozen
words !

What has bewitch'd thee, man ? Is she not fair ?

Theo. O fair indeed as woman need be form'd
To please and be belov'd ! Tho', to speak ho-
nestly,

I've fairer seen ; yet such a form as Orra's

For ever in my busy fancy dwells,
 Whene'er I think of wiving my lone state.
 It is not this ; she has too many lures ;
 Why wilt thou urge me on to meet her scorn ?
 I am not worthy of her.

Hart. (*pushing him away with gentle anger*)
 Go to ! I praised thy modesty short-while,
 And now with dull and senseless perseverance,
 Thou would'st o'erlay me with it. Go thy
 ways !

If thro' thy fault, thus shrinking from the onset,
 She should with this untoward cub be matched,
 'Twill haunt thy conscience like a damning sin,
 And may it gnaw thee shrewdly !

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

*A small Apartment in the Castle ; enter RUDIGERE
 musing gloomily, and muttering to himself some
 time before he speaks aloud.*

Rud. No, no ; it is to formless air dissolved,
 This cherish'd hope, this vision of my brain !
 (*Pacing to and fro, and then stopping and
 musing as before.*)

I daily stood contrasted in her sight
 With an ungainly fool ; and when she smiled,
 Methought —— But wherefore still upon this
 thought,

Which was perhaps but a delusion then,
 Brood I with ceaseless torment ? Never, never !
 O never more on me, from Orra's eye,
 Approving glance shall light, or gentle look !

This day's disgrace mars all my goodly dreams.
My path to greatness is at once shut up.
Still in the dust my grov'ling fortune lies.

(Striking his breast in despair)

Tame thine aspiring spirit, luckless wretch !
There is no hope for thee !

And shall I tame it ? No, by saints and
devils !

The laws have cast me off from every claim
Of house and kindred, and within my veins
Turn'd noble blood to baseness and reproach :
I'll cast them off : why should they be to me
A bar, and no protection ?

*(Pacing again to and fro, and muttering low
for some time before he speaks aloud)*

Aye ; this may still within my toils enthrall her :
This is the secret weakness of her mind
On which I'll clutch my hold.

*Enter CATHRINA behind him, laying her hand
upon him.*

Cath. Ha ! speak'st thou to thyself ?

Rud. (starting) I did not speak.

Cath. Thou did'st ; thy busy mind gave sound
to thoughts

Which thou didst utter with a thick harsh voice,
Like one who speaks in sleep. Tell me their
meaning.

Rud. And dost thou so presume ? Be wise ;
be humble.

(After a pause)

Has Orra oft of late requested thee

To tell her stories of the restless dead ?
Of spectres rising at the midnight watch
By the lone trav'ler's bed ?

Cath. Wherefore of late dost thou so oft en-
quire

Of what she says and does ?

Rud. Be wise, and answer what I ask of thee ;
This is thy duty now.

Cath. Alas, alas ! I know that one false step
Has o'er me set a stern and ruthless master.

Rud. No, madam ; 'tis thy grave and virtuous
seeming ;

Thy saint-like carriage, rigid and demure,
On which thy high reputé so long has stood,
Endowing thee with right of censorship
O'er every simple maid, whose cheerful youth
Wears not so thick a mask, that o'er thee sets
This ruthless master. Hereon rests my power :
I might expose, and therefore I command thee.

Cath. Hush, hush ! approaching steps !

They'll find me here !

I'll do whate'er thou wilt.

Rud. It is but Maurice : hie thee to thy
closet,

Where I will shortly come to thee. Be thou
My faithful agent in a weighty matter,
On which I now am bent, and I will prove
Thy stay and shelter from the world's contempt.

Cath. Maurice to find me here ! Where shall
I hide me ?

Rud. No where, but boldly pass him as he
enters.

I'll find some good excuse ; he will be silent :
He is my agent also.

Cath. Dost thou trust him ?

Rud. Avarice his master is, as shame is thine :
Therefore I trust to deal with both. — Away !

Enter MAURICE, passing CATHRINA as she goes out.

Maur. What, doth the grave and virtuous
Cathrina,
Vouchsafe to give thee of her company ?

Rud. Yes, rigid saint ! she has bestowed upon
me
Some grave advice to bear with pious meekness
My late discomfiture.

Maur. Aye, and she call'd it,
I could be sworn ! heaven's judgment on thy
pride.

Rud. E'en so : thou'st guessed it. — Shall we
to the ramparts
And meet the western breeze ?

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE III.

*A spacious Apartment ; enter HUGHOBERT and
URSTON.*

Hugh. (*speaking with angry gesticulation as
he enters*)

I feed and clothe these drones, and in return
They cheat, deceive, abuse me ; nay, belike,
Laugh in their sleeve the while. By their advice,
This cursed tourney I proclaim'd ; for still

They puffed me up with praises of my son —
His grace, his skill in arms, his horsemanship —
Count Falkenstein to him was but a clown —
And so, in Orra's eyes to give him honour,
Full surely did I think — I'll hang them all !
I'll starve them in a dungeon shut from light :
I'll heap my boards no more with dainty fare
To feed false flatterers.

Urst. That indeed were wise :
But art thou sure, when men shall speak the
 truth,
That thou wilt feed them for it ? I but hinted
In gentle words to thee, that Glottenbal
Was praised with partial or affected zeal,
And thou receiv'dst it angrily.

Hugh. Aye, true indeed : but thou did'st
 speak of him
As one bereft of all capacity.
Now tho', God wot ! I look on his defects
With no blind love, and even in my ire
Will sometimes call him fool ; yet, ne'ertheless,
He still has parts and talents, tho' obscured
By some untoward failings. — Heaven be praised !
He wants not strength at least and well turn'd
 limbs,
Had they but taught him how to use them.
 Knaves !
They have neglected him.

*(Enter GLOTTENBAL, who draws back on seeing
 his Father.)*

Advance, young Sir : art thou afraid of me ?

That thus thou shrinkest like a sculking thief
To make disgrace the more apparent on thee?

Glott. Yes, call it then disgrace, or what you
please ;

Had not my lance's point somewhat awry
Glanced on his shield ——

Hugh. E'en so ; I doubt it not ;
Thy lance's point, and every thing about thee
Hath glanced awry. Go, rid my house, I say,
Of all those feasting flatterers that deceive thee ;
They harbour here no more : dismiss them
quickly.

Glott. Do it yourself, my Lord ; you are, I
trow,

Angry enough to do it sharply.

Hugh. (turning to Urston) Faith !
He gibes me fairly here ; there's reason in't ;
Fools speak not thus. (to Glottenbal) Go to !
if I am angry,

Thou art a graceless son to tell me so.

Glott. Have you not bid me still to speak the
truth ?

Hugh. (to Urston) Again thou hear'st he
makes an apt reply.

Urst. He wants not words.

Hugh. Nor meaning neither, Father.

(Enter ELEONORA.)

Well Dame ; where hast thou been ?

El. I came from Orra.

Hugh. Hast thou been pleading in our son's
excuse ?

And how did she receive it ?

El. I tried to do it, but her present humour
Is jest and merriment. She is behind me,
Stopping to stroke a hound, that in the corridor
Came to her fawningly to be cared.

Glott. (listening) Aye, she is coming ; light
and quick her steps ;
So sound they, when her spirits are unruly ;
But I am bold ; she shall not mock me now.

*(Enter ORRA, tripping gaily, and playing with
the folds of her scarf.)*

Methinks you trip it briskly, gentle Dame.

Or. Does it offend you, noble Knight.

Glott. Go to !

I know your meaning. Wherefore smile you so ?

Or. Because, good sooth ! with tired and
aching sides

I have not power to laugh.

Glott. Full well I know why thou so merry art.
Thou think'st of him to whom thou gav'st that
sprig

Of hopeful green, his rusty casque to grace,
Whilst at thy feet his honour'd glave he laid.

Or. Nay, rather say, of him, who at my feet,
From his proud courser's back, more gallantly
Laid his most precious self ; then stole away,
Thro' modesty, unthank'd, nor left behind
Of all his geer that flutter'd in the dust,
Or glove or band, or fragment of torn hose,
For dear remembrance-sake, that in my sleeve

I might have stuck it. O! thou wrong'st me
much

To think my merriment a ref'rence hath
To any one but him. (*Laughing.*)

El. Nay, Orra; these wild fits of uncurb'd
laughter,

Athwart the gloomy tenor of your mind,
As it has low'r'd of late, so keenly cast,
Unsuited seem and strange.

Or. O nothing strange, my gentle Eleonora!
Did'st thou ne'er see the swallow's veering breast,
Winging the air beneath some murky cloud
In the sunn'd glimpses of a stormy day,
Shiver in silv'ry brightness?

Or boatman's oar, as vivid lightning flash
In the faint gleam, that like a spirit's path
Tracks the still waters of some sullen lake?
Or lonely Tower, from its brown mass of woods,
Give to the parting of a wintry sun
One hasty glance in mockery of the night
Closing in darkness round it? — Gentle Friend!
Chide not her mirth, who was sad yesterday,
And may be so to-morrow.

Glott. And wherefore art thou sad, unless it is
From thine own wayward humour? Other
Dames,

Were they so courted, would be gay and happy.

Or. Wayward it needs must be, since I am
sad

When such perfection woos me.

Pray good Glottenbal,

How did'st thou learn with such a wond'rous grace
 So high in air to toss thine armed heels,
 And clutch with outspread hands the slipp'ry sand?
 I was the more amaz'd at thy dexterity,
 As this, of all thy many gallant feats
 Before-hand promised, most modestly
 Thou did'st forbear to mention.

Glott.

Gibe away!

I care not for thy gibing. With fair lists,
 And no black arts against me —

*Hugh. (advancing angrily from the bottom of
 the stage to Glottenbal.)*

Hold thy peace!

(*To Orra.*) And, Madam, be at least somewhat
 restrained

In your unruly humour.

Or. Pardon, my Lord: I knew not you were
 near me.

My humour is unruly: with your leave,
 I will retire till I have curb'd it better.

(*To Eleanora.*) I would not lose your company,
 sweet Countess.

El. We'll go together, then.

[*EXEUNT Orra and Eleanora.*

(*Manet Hughobert; who paces angrily
 about the stage, while Glottenbal stands
 on the front, thumping his legs with his
 sheathed rapier.*)

There is no striving with a forward girl,
 Nor pushing on a fool. My harassed life
 Day after day more irksome grows. Curs'd bane!
 I'll toil no more for this untoward match.

(*Enter RUDIGERE, stealing behind, and listening.*)

Rud. You are disturb'd, my Lord.

Hugh. What, is it thou? I am disturb'd in sooth.

Rud. Aye, Orra has been here; and some light words

Of girlish levity have mov'd you. How!

Toil for this match no more! What else remains,
If this should be abandoned, noble Aldenberg,
That can be worth your toil?

Hugh. I'll match the cub elsewhere.

Rud. What call ye matching?

Hugh. Surely for him some other virtuous maid
Of high descent, tho' not so richly dowried,
May be obtain'd.

Rud. Within your walls, perhaps,
Some waiting gentlewoman, who perchance
May be some fifty generations back
Descended from a king, he will himself
Ere long obtain, without your aid, my Lord.

Hugh. Thou mak'st me mad! the dolt! the
senseless dolt!

What can I do for him? I cannot force

A noble maid entrusted to my care:

I, the sole guardian of her helpless youth!

Rud. That were indeed unfit; but there are
means

To make her yield consent.

Hugh. Then by my faith, good friend, I'll
call thee wizard,

If thou can'st find them out. What means
already,

Short of compulsion, have we left untried?
And now the term of my authority
Wears to its close.

Rud. I know it well ; and therefore powerful
means,
And of quick operation, must be sought.

Hugh. Speak plainly to me.

Rud. I have watch'd her long.
I've seen her cheek, flush'd with the rosy glow
Of jocund spirits, deadly pale become
At tale of nightly sprite or apparition,
Such as all hear, 'tis true, with greedy ears,
Saying, "Saints, save us !" but forget as quickly.
I've mark'd her long : she has, with all her
shrewdness

And playful merriment, a gloomy fancy,
That broods within itself on fearful things.

Hugh. And what doth this avail us ?

Rud. Hear me out.
Your ancient castle in the Suabian forest
Hath, as too well you know, belonging to it,
Or false or true, frightful reports. There hold
her

Strictly confin'd in sombre banishment ;
And doubt not but she will, ere long, full
gladly

Her freedom purchase at the price you name.

Hugh. On what pretence can I confine her
there ?

It were most odious.

Rud. Can pretence be wanting?
Has she not favour shewn to Theobald,

Who in your neighbourhood, with his sworn friend
The Banneret of Basle, suspiciously
Prolongs his stay ? A poor and paltry Count,
Unmeet to match with her. And want ye then
A reason for removing her with speed
To some remoter quarter ? Out upon it !
You are too scrupulous.

Hugh. Thy scheme is good, but cruel.

*(Glottenbal — who has been drawing nearer
to them, and attending to the last part of
their discourse.)*

Glott. O much I like it, dearly wicked Rudi-
gere !

She then will turn her mind to other thoughts
Than scornful gibes at me.

Hugh. I to her father swore I would protect
her :

I must fulfil his will.

Rud. And, in that will, her father did desire
She might be match'd with this your only son ;
Therefore you're firmly bound all means to use
That may the end attain.

Hugh. Walk forth with me, we'll talk of this
at large. [EXEUNT *Hugh. and Rud.*

*(Manet Glottenbal, who comes forward from
the bottom of the stage, with the action of
a knight advancing to the charge.)*

Glott. Yes, thus it is : I have the slight o't now :
And were the combat yet to come, I'd shew
them

I'm not a whit behind the bravest knight,
Cross luck excepted.

Enter MAURICE.

Maur. My Lord, indulge us of your courtesy.

Glott. In what, I pray ?

Maur. Did not Fernando tell you ?

We are all met within our social bower ;

And I have wager'd on your head, that none

But you alone, within the Count's domains,

Can to the bottom drain the chased horn.

Come, do not linger here when glory calls you.

Glott. Think'st thou that Theobald could drink
so stoutly ?

Maur. He, paltry chief ! he herds with sober
burghers ;

A goblet, half its size, would conquer him.

[EXEUNT.]

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *A Garden with Trees and Shrubs, &c.* ORRA, THEOBALD, and HARTMAN, are discovered in a shaded Walk at the bottom of the Stage, speaking in dumb Show, which they cross, disappearing behind the Trees ; and are presently followed by CATHRINA and ALICE, who continue walking there. OR. THEO. and HART. then appear again, entering near the front of the Stage.

OR. (*talking to Hart. as she enters.*) And so,
since fate has made me, woe the day !
That poor and good-for-nothing, helpless being,
Woman yclept, I must consign myself
With all my lands and rights into the hands
Of some proud man, and say, “ Take all, I pray,
And do me in return the grace and favour
To be my master.”

Hart. Nay, gentle lady, you constrain my
words,
And load them with a meaning harsh and foreign
To what they truly bear. — A master ! No ;
A valiant, gentle mate, who in the field
Or in the council will maintain your right :
A noble, equal partner.

Or. (*shaking her head.*) Well I know,
In such a partnership, the share of power

Allotted to the wife. See, noble Falkenstein
Hath silent been the while, nor spoke one word
In aid of all your specious arguments.

What's your advice, my Lord? (*to Theo.*)

Theo. Ah, noble Orra,
'Twere like self-murder to give honest counsel;
Then urge me not. I frankly do confess
I should be more heroic than I am.

Or. Right well I see thy head approves my
plan,

And by and by so will thy gen'rous heart.
In short, I would, without another's leave,
Improve the low condition of my peasants,
And cherish them in peace. Ev'n now me-
thinks

Each little cottage of my native vale
Swells out its earthen sides, up-heaves its roof,
Like to a hillock mov'd by lab'ring mole,
And with green trail-weeds clamb'ring up its
walls,

Roses and ev'ry gay and fragrant plant
Before my fancy stands, a fairy bower :
Aye, and within it too do fairies dwell.

(*Looking playfully through her fingers like
a shew-glass.*)

Peep thro' its wreathed window, if indeed
The flowers grow not too close, and there
within

Thou'lt see some half a dozen rosy brats
Eating from wooden bowls their dainty milk ;—
Those are my mountain elves. See'st thou not
Their very forms distinctly?

Theo. Distinctly; and most beautiful the sight !
A sight which sweetly stirreth in the heart
Feelings that gladden and ennoble it,
Dancing like sun-beams on the rippled sea ;
A blessed picture ! Foul befall the man
Whose narrow, selfish soul would shade or mar it !

Hart. To this right heartily I say Amen !
But if there be a man whose gen'rous soul
(*turning to Orra.*)

Like ardour fills ; who would with thee pursue
Thy gen'rous plan ; who would his harness don—

Or. (*putting her hand on him in gentle inter-*
ruption.)

Nay, valiant Banneret, who would, an't please
you,

His harness doff : all feuds, all strife forbear,
All military rivalry, all lust
Of added power, and live in steady quietness,
A mild and fost'ring Lord. Know you of one
That would so share my task ? — You answer
not ;

And your brave friend, methinks, casts on the
ground

A thoughtful look : wots he of such a Lord ?

(*to Theo.*)

Theo. Wot I of such a Lord ? No, noble
Orra,

I do not ; nor does Hartman, tho' perhaps
His friendship may betray his judgment. No ;
None such exist : we are all fierce, contentious,
Restless and proud, and prone to vengeful feuds ;
The very distant sound of war excites us,

Like the curb'd courser list'ing to the chase,
Who paws, and frets, and bites the rein. Trust
none

To cross thy gentle, but most princely purpose,
Who hath on head a circling helmet wore,
Or ever grasp'd a glave. — But ne'ertheless
There is — I know a man. — Might I be bold ?

Or. Being so honest, boldness is your right.

Theo. Permitted then, I'll say, I know a man,
Tho' most unworthy Orra's Lord to be,
Who, as her champion, friend, devoted soldier,
Might yet commend himself; and, so received,
Who would at her command, for her defence
His sword right proudly draw. An honour'd
sword,

Like that which at the gate of Paradise
From steps prophane the blessed region guarded.

Or. Thanks to the gen'rous knight ! I also
know

The man thou would'st commend ; and when
my state

Such service needeth, to no sword but his
Will I that service owe.

Theo. Most noble Orra ! greatly is he honour'd ;
And will not murmur that a higher wish,
Too high, and too presumptuous, is repress.

(Kissing her hand with great respect.)

Or. Nay, Rodolph Hartman, clear that cloudy
brow,

And look on Falkenstein and on myself,
As two co-burghers of thy native city,
(For such I mean ere long to be,) and claiming

From thee, as cadets from an elder born,
Thy chearing equal kindness.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. The Count is now at leisure to receive
The Lord of Falkenstein, and Rodolph Hartman.

Hart. We shall attend him shortly.

(Exit Servant.)

(Aside to Theo.) Must we now
Our purpos'd suit to some pretended matter
Of slighter import change?

Theo. *(to Hart. aside.)* Assuredly.—
Madam, I take my leave with all devotion.

Hart. I with all friendly wishes.

[EXEUNT Theo. and Hart.]

*(CATHRINA and ALICE now advance through
the shrubs, &c. at the bottom of the stage,
while ORRA remains, wrapped in thought,
on the front.)*

Cath. Madam, you're thoughtful; something
occupies
Your busy mind.

Or. What was't we talk'd of, when the
worthy Banneret
With Falkenstein upon our converse broke?

Cath. How we should spend our time, when
in your castle
You shall your state maintain in ancient splen-
dour,

With all your vassals round you.

Or. Aye, so it was.

Al. And you did say, my Lady,

It should not be a cold unsocial grandeur :
That you would keep, the while, a merry house.

Or. O doubt it not ! I'll gather round my
board

All that heav'n sends to me of way-worn folks,
And noble travellers, and neighb'ring friends,
Both young and old. Within my ample hall,
The worn-out man of arms, (of whom too many,
Nobly descended, rove like reckless vagrants
From one proud chieftain's castle to another,
Half chid, half honour'd,) shall o'tip-toe tread,
Tossing his grey locks from his wrinkled brow
With cheerful freedom, as he boasts his feats
Of days gone by. — Music we'll have ; and oft
The bick'ring dance upon our oaken floors
Shall, thund'ring loud, strike on the distant ear
Of 'nighted trav'lers, who shall gladly bend
Their doubtful footsteps tow'rds the cheering
din.

Solemn, and grave, and cloister'd, and demure
We shall not be. Will this content ye, damsels ?

Al. O passing well ! 'twill be a pleasant life ;
Free from all stern subjection ; blithe and fan-
ciful ;

We'll do whate'er we list.

Cath. That right and prudent is, I hope thou
meanest.

Al. Why ever so suspicious and so strict ?
How could'st thou think I had another meaning ?
(*To Orra.*) And shall we ramble in the woods
full oft

With hound and horn ?—that is my dearest joy.

Or. Thou runn'st me fast, good Alice. Do not doubt

This shall be wanting to us. Ev'ry season
Shall have its suited pastime : even Winter
In its deep noon, when mountains piled with
snow,

And chok'd up valleys from our mansion bar
All entrance, and nor guest nor traveller
Sounds at our gate ; the empty hall forsaking,
In some warm chamber, by the crackling fire
We'll hold our little, snug, domestic court,
Plying our work with song and tale between.

Cath. And stories too, I ween, of ghosts and
spirits,

And things unearthly, that on Michael's eve
Rise from the yawning tombs.

Or. Thou thinkest then one night o'th' year
is truly

More horrid than the rest.

Cath. Perhaps 'tis only silly superstition :

But yet it is well known the Count's brave
father

Would rather on a glacier's point have lain,
By angry tempests rock'd, than on that night
Sunk in a downy couch in Brunier's castle.

Or. How, pray ? What fearful thing did scare
him so ?

Cath. Hast thou ne'er heard the story of
Count Hugo,

His ancestor, who slew the hunter-knight ?

Or. (*eagerly.*) Tell it, I pray thee.

Al. Cathrina, tell it not : it is not right :

Such stories ever change her cheerful spirits
To gloomy pensiveness ; her rosy bloom
To the wan colour of a shrouded corse.

(*To Orra.*) What pleasure is there, Lady, when
thy hand,

Cold as the valley's ice, with hasty grasp
Seizes on her who speaks, while thy shrunk form
Cow'ring and shiv'ring stands with keen turn'd
ear

To catch what follows of the pausing tale ?

Or. And let me cow'ring stand, and be my
touch

The valley's ice : there is a pleasure in it.

Al. Say'st thou indeed there is a pleasure in it ?

Or. Yea, when the cold blood shoots through
every vein :

When every hair's-pit on my shrunken skin
A knotted knoll becomes, and to mine ears
Strange inward sounds awake, and to mine
eyes

Rush stranger tears, there is a joy in fear.

(*Catching hold of Cathrina.*)

Tell it, Cathrina, for the life within me
Beats thick, and stirs to hear it.

He slew the hunter-knight ?

Cath. Since I must tell it, then, the story goes
That grim Count Aldenbergh, the ancestor
Of Hughobert, and also of yourself,
From hatred or from envy, to his castle
A noble knight, who hunted in the forest,
Well the Black Forest named, basely decoyed,
And there, within his chamber, murder'd him —

Or. Merciful Heaven ! and in my veins there
runs

A murderer's blood. Said'st thou not, *murder'd*
him ?

Cath. Aye ; as he lay asleep, at dead of night.

Or. A deed most horrible !

Cath. It was on Michael's eve ; and since
that time,

The neighb'ring hinds oft hear the midnight
yell

Of spectre-hounds, and see the spectre shapes

Of huntsmen on their sable steeds, with still

A nobler hunter riding in their van

To cheer the chase, shewn by the moon's pale
beams,

When wanes its horn in long October nights.

Or. This hath been often seen ?

Cath. Aye, so they say.

But, as the story goes, on Michael's eve,

And on that night alone of all the year,

The hunter-knight himself, having a horn

Thrice sounded at the gate, the castle enters ;

And, in the very chamber where he died,

Calls on his murd'rer, or in his default

Some true descendant of his house, to loose

His spirit from its torment ; for his body

Is laid i'the earth unblest'd, and none can tell

The spot of its interment.

Or. Call on some true descendant of his
race !

It were to such a fearful interview.

But in that chamber, on that night alone —

Hath he elsewhere to any of the race
Appear'd ? or hath he power —

Al. Nay, nay, forbear :
See how she looks. (*To Orra.*) I fear thou art not
well.

Or. There is a sickly faintness come upon me.

Al. And did'st thou say there is a joy in fear ?

Or. My mind of late has strange impressions
ta'en.

I know not how it is.

Al. A few nights since,
Stealing o'tiptoe, softly thro' your chamber,
Towards my own —

Or. O heaven defend us ! did'st thou see
aught there ?

Al. Only your sleeping self. But you appear'd
Distress'd and troubled in your dreams ; and
once

I thought to wake you ere I left the chamber,
But I forbore.

Or. And glad I am thou did'st.
It is not dreams I fear ; for still with me
There is an indistinctness o'er them cast,
Like the dull gloom of misty twilight, where
Before mine eyes pass all incongruous things,
Huge, horrible and strange, on which I stare
As idiots do upon this changeful world,
With nor surprise nor speculation. No ;
Dreams I fear not : it is the dreadful waking,
When, in deep midnight stillness, the roused
fancy

Takes up th' imperfect shadows of its sleep,

Like a marr'd speech snatch'd from a bungler's
mouth,

Shaping their forms distinctively and vivid
To visions horrible : — this is my bane ; —
It is the dreadful waking that I fear.

Al. Well, speak of other things. There in
good time

Your ghostly father comes with quicken'd steps,
Like one who bears some tidings good or ill.
Heaven grant they may be good !

Enter URSTON.

Or. Father, you seem disturb'd.

Ur. Daughter, I am in truth disturb'd. The
Count

All o'the sudden, being much enrag'd
That Falkenstein still lingers near these walls,
Resolves to send thee hence, to be a while
In banishment detain'd, till on his son
Thou look'st with better favour.

Or. Aye, indeed !
That is to say perpetual banishment :
A sentence light or heavy, as the place
Is sweet or irksome he would send me to.

Ur. He will contrive to make it, doubt him
not,
Irksome enough. Therefore I would advise thee
To feign at least, but for a little time,
A disposition to obey his wishes.
He's stern, but not relentless ; and his dame,
The gentle Eleanor, will still befriend you,
When fit occasion serves.

Or. What said'st thou, Father?
To feign a disposition to obey!
I did mistake thy words.

Urst. No, gentle daughter;
So press'd, thou mayest feign and yet be blameless.

A trusty guardian's faith with thee he holds not,
And therefore thou art free to meet his wrongs
With what defence thou hast.

Or. (*proudly.*) Nay pardon me; I, with an
unshorn crown,
Must hold the truth in plain simplicity,
And am in nice distinctions most unskilful.

Urst. Lady, have I deserv'd this sharpness?
oft
Thine infant hand has strok'd this shaven crown:
Thou'st ne'er till now reproach'd it.

Or. (*bursting into tears.*)
Pardon, O pardon me, my gentle Urston!
Pardon a wayward child, whose eager temper
Doth sometimes mar the kindness of her heart.
Father, am I forgiven? (*Hanging on him.*)

Urst. Thou art, thou art:
Thou art forgiven; more than forgiven, my
child.

Or. Then lead me to the Count, I will myself
Learn his stern purpose.

Urst. In the hall he is,
Seated in state, and waiting to receive you.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE III.

A spacious Apartment, or Baron's Hall, with a Chair of State, HUGHOBERT, ELEANORA, and GLOTTENBAL enter near the Front, speaking as they enter ; and afterwards enter Vassals and Attendants, who range themselves at the bottom of the Stage.

Hugh. Cease, Dame ! I will not hear ; thou
striv'st in vain

With thy weak pleadings. Orra hence must go
Within the hour, unless she will engage
Her plighted word to marry Glottenbal.

Glott. Aye, and a mighty hardship, by the
mass !

Hugh. I've summon'd her in solemn form
before me,

That these my vassals should my act approve,
Knowing my right of guardianship ; and also
That her late father, in his dying moments,
Did will she should be married to my son ;
Which will, she now must promise to obey,
Or take the consequence.

El. But why so hasty ?

Hugh. Why, say'st thou ? Falkenstein still in
these parts

Lingers with sly intent. Even now he left me,
After an interview of small importance,
Which he and Hartman, as a blind pretence
For seeing Orra, formally requested.
I say again she must forthwith obey me,
Or take the consequence of wayward will.

El. Nay, not for Orra do I now intreat
So much as for thyself. Bethink thee well
What honour thou shalt have, when it is known
Thy ward from thy protecting roof was sent ;
Thou who should'st be to her a friend, a father.

Hugh. But do I send her unprotected ? No !
Brave Rudigere conducts her with a band
Of trusty spearmen. In her new abode ,
She will be safe as here.

El. Ha ! Rudigere !
Put'st thou such trust in him ? Alas, my Lord !
His heart is full of cunning and deceit.
Wilt thou to him the flower of all thy race
Rashly intrust ? O be advised, my Lord !

Hugh. Thy ghostly father tells thee so, I
doubt not.

Another priest confesses Rudigere,
And Urston likes him not. But can'st thou
think,

With aught but honest purpose, he would chuse
From all her women the severe Cathrina,
So strictly virtuous, for her companion ?
This puts all doubt to silence. Say no more,
Else I shall think thou plead'st against my son,
More with a step-dame's than a mother's feelings.

Glott. Aye, marry does she, father ! And for-
sooth !

Regards me as a fool. No marvel then
That Orra scorns me ; being taught by her, —
How should she else ? — So to consider me.

Hugh. (to Glottenbal.) Tut ! hold thy tongue.

El. He wrongs me much, my Lord.

Hugh. No more, for here she comes.

Enter ORRA, attended by URSTON, ALICE and CATHRINA, and HUGHOBERT seats himself in his chair of state, the vassals, &c. ranging themselves on each side.

Hugh. (to Orra.) Madam and ward, placed
under mine authority,
And to my charge committed by my kinsman,
Ulric of Aldenberg, thy noble father ;
Having all gentle means essay'd to win thee
To the fulfilment of his dying will,
That did decree his heiress should be married
With Glottenbal my heir ; I solemnly
Now call upon thee, ere that rougher means
Be used for this good end, to promise truly,
Thou wilt, within a short and stated time,
Before the altar give thy plighted faith
To this my only son. I wait thine answer.
Orra of Aldenberg, wilt thou do this ?

Or. Count of the same, my lord and guardian,
I will not.

Hugh. Have a care, thou froward maid !
'Tis thy last opportunity : ere long
Thou shalt, within a dreary dwelling pent,
Count thy dull hours, told by the dead man's
watch,
And wish thou had'st not been so proudly wilful.

Or. And let my dull hours by the dead man's
watch
Be told ; yea, make me too the dead man's
mate,

My dwelling place the nailed coffin ; still
 I would prefer it to the living Lord
 Your goodness offers me.

Hugh. Art thou bewitch'd ?
 Is he not young, well featured and well form'd ?
 And dost thou put him in thy estimation
 With bones and sheeted clay ?
 Beyond endurance is thy stubborn spirit.
 Right well thy father knew that all thy sex
 Stubborn and headstrong are ; therefore, in
 wisdom,
 He vested me with power that might compel
 thee
 To what he will'd should be.

Or. O not in wisdom !
 Say rather in that weak, but gen'rous faith,
 Which said to him, the cope of heaven would fall
 And smother in its cradle his swath'd babe,
 Rather than thou, his mate in arms, his kins-
 man,
 Who by his side in many a field had fought,
 Should'st take advantage of his confidence
 For sordid ends. —

My brave and noble father !
 A voice comes from thy grave and cries against
 it,
 And bids me to be bold. Thine awful form
 Rises before me, — and that look of anguish
 On thy dark brow ! — O no ! I blame thee not.

Hugh. Thou seem'st beside thyself with such
 wild gestures

And strangely-flashing eyes. Repress these
fancies,

And to plain reason listen. Thou hast said,
For sordid ends I have advantage ta'en.
Since thy brave father's death, by war and com-
pact,

Thou of thy lands hast lost a third ; whilst I,
By happy fortune, in my heir's behalf,
Have doubled my domains to what they were
When Ulric chose him as a match for thee.

Or. O, and what speaketh this, but that my
father

Domains regarded not ; and thought a man
Such as the son should be of such a man
As thou to him appear'dst, a match more ho-
nourable

Than one of ampler state. Take thou from
Glottenbal

The largely added lands of which thou boastest,
And put, in lieu thereof, into his stores
Some weight of manly sense and gen'rous worth,
And I will say thou keep'st faith with thy friend :
But as it is, altho' a king's domains
Encreas'd thy wealth, thou poorly would'st de-
ceive him.

Hugh. (*rising from his chair in anger.*)

Now, Madam, be all counsel on this matter
Between us closed. Prepare thee for thy jour-
ney.

El. Nay, good my Lord! consider.

Hugh. (*to Eleanor.*) What, again!

Have I not said thou hast an alien's heart
From me and mine. Learn to respect my will :
— Be silent, as becomes a youthful Dame.

Urst. For a few days may she not still remain ?

Hugh. No, priest ; not for an hour. It is
my pleasure

That she for Brunier's castle do set forth
Without delay.

Or. (*with a faint starting movement.*) In Brunier's castle !

Hug. Aye;

And doth this change the colour of thy cheek,
And give thy alter'd voice a feebler sound ?

(*Aside to Glottenbal.*)

She shrinks, now to her, boy ; this is thy time.

Glott. (*to Orra.*) Unless thou wilt, thou need'st
not go at all.

There is full many a maiden would right gladly
Accept the terms we offer, and remain.

(*A pause.*) Wilt thou not answer me ?

Or. I heard thee not. —

I heard thy voice but not thy words. What
said'st thou ?

Glott. I say, there's many a maiden would right
gladly

Accept the terms we offer, and remain.

The daughter of a King hath match'd ere now
With mine inferior. We are link'd together .

As 'twere by right and natural property.

And as I've said before I say again,

I love thee too : What more couldst thou de-
sire ?

Or. I thank thee for thy courtship, tho' uncouth;
For it confirms my purpose : and my strength
Grows as thou speak'st, firm like the deep-bas'd
rock.

(*To Hughobert.*) Now for my journey when you
will, my Lord;

I'm ready.

Hugh. Be it so ! on thine own head
Rest all the blame.

(*Going from her.*)

Perverse past all belief !

(*Turning round to her sternly.*)

Orra of Aldenberg, wilt thou obey me ?

Or. Count of that noble house, with all respect,
Again I say I will not.

(*EXIT Hughobert in anger, followed by
Glottenbal, Urston, &c. Manent only
Eleanora, Cathrina, Alice and Orra,
who keeps up with stately pride till
Hughobert and all Attendants are gone
out, and then throwing herself into the
arms of Eleanora, gives vent to her
feelings.*)

El. Sweet Orra ! be not so depress'd ; thou
goest

For a short term, soon to return again ;
The banishment is mine who stays behind.
But I will beg of heaven with ceaseless prayers
To have thee soon restored : and, when I dare,
Will plead with Hughobert in thy behalf ;
He is not always stern.

Or. Thanks, gentle friend ! Thy voice to me
doth sound
Like the last sounds of kindly nature ; dearly
In my remembrance shall they rest. — What
sounds,
What sights, what horrid intercourse I may,
Ere we shall meet again, be doom'd to prove,
High heaven alone doth know. — If that indeed
We e'er shall meet again !

(Falls on her neck and weeps.)

El. Nay, nay ! come to my chamber. There
awhile
Compose your spirits. Be not so deprest.
[EXEUNT.]

*(Rudigere, who has appear'd, during the last part
of the above scene, at the bottom of the stage,
half concealed, as if upon the watch, now comes
forward.)*

(Speaking as he advances.)

Hold firm her pride till fairly from these walls
Our journey is begun ; then fortune hail !
Thy favours are secured.

(Looking off the stage.)

Ho, Maurice there !

Enter MAURICE.

My faithful Maurice, I would speak with thee
I leave thee here behind me ; to thy care,
My int'rests I commit ; be it thy charge
To counteract thy Lady's influence,
Who will entreat her Lord the term to shorten

Of Orra's absence, maiming thus my plan,
Which must, belike, have time to be effected.
Be vigilant, be artful ; and be sure
Thy services I amply will repay.

Maur. Aye, thou hast said so, and I have
believed thee.

Rud. And dost thou doubt ?

Maur. No ; yet meantime, good sooth !
If somewhat of thy bounty I might finger,
'Twere well : I like to have some actual proof.
Did'st thou not promise it ?

Rud. 'Tis true I did,
But other pressing calls have drain'd my means.

Maur. And other pressing calls my ebbing
faith
May also drain, and change my promis'd pur-
pose.

Rud. Go to ! I know thou art a greedy leech,
Tho' ne'ertheless thou lov'st me.

*(Taking a small case from his pocket, which
he opens.)*

See'st thou here ?

I have no coin ; but look upon these jewels :
I took them from a knight I slew in battle.
When I am Orra's lord, thou shalt receive,
Were it ten thousand crowns, whate'er their
worth

Shall by a skilful lapidary be
In honesty esteem'd.

(Gives him the jewels.)

Maur. I thank thee, but methinks their lus-
tre's dim.

I've seen the stones before upon thy breast

In gala days, but never heard thee boast
They were of so much value.

Rud. I was too prudent : I had lost them else.
To no one but thyself would I entrust
The secret of their value.

Enter Servant.

Serv. Sir Rudigere, the spearmen are without,
Waiting your further orders, for the journey.

Rud. (*to* Servant.) I'll come to them anon.

[*EXIT* Servant.]

Before I go, I'll speak to thee again.

[*EXEUNT severally.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *A Forest with a half-ruined Castle in the Back-Ground, seen through the Trees by Moon-light. FRANKO and several Outlaws are discovered sitting on the Ground, round a Fire, with Flaggons, &c. by them, as if they had been drinking.*

Song of several voices.

THE chough and crow to roost are gone,
The owl sits on the tree,
The hush'd wind wails with feeble moan,
Like infant charity.

The wild-fire dances on the fen,
The red star sheds its ray,
Up-rouse ye, then, my merry men!
It is our op'ning day.

Both child and nurse are fast asleep,
And clos'd is every flower,
And winking tapers faintly peep
High from my Lady's bower ;
Bewilder'd hinds with shorten'd ken
Shrink on their murky way,
Up-rouse ye, then, my merry men !
It is our op'ning day.

Nor board nor garner own we now,
Nor roof nor latched door,
Nor kind mate, bound by holy vow
To bless a good man's store ;

*Noon hulls us in a gloomy den,
And night is grown our day,
Up-rouse ye, then, my merry men !
And use it as ye may.*

Frank. (to 1st. Out.) How lik'st thou this, Fernando ?

1st Out. Well sung i'faith ! but serving ill our turn,

Who would all trav'lers and benighted folks
Scare from our precincts. Such sweet harmony
Will rather tempt invasion.

Frank. Fear not, for mingled voices, heard afar,

Thro' glade and glen and thicket, stealing on
To distant list'ners, seem wild-goblin-sounds ;
At which the lonely trav'ler checks his steed,
Pausing with long-drawn breath and keen-turn'd ear ;

And twilight pilferers cast down in haste
Their ill-got burthens, while the homeward hind
Turns from his path, full many a mile about,
Thro' bog and mire to grope his blund'ring way.
Such, to the startled ear of superstition,
Were seraph's song, could we like seraphs sing.

Enter 1st Outlaw hastily.

2d Out. Disperse ye diff'rent ways : we are undone.

Frank. How say'st thou, shrinking poltron ?
we undone !

Outlaw'd and ruin'd men, who live by daring !

2d Out. A train of armed men, some noble
 Dame
Escorting, (so their scatter'd words discover'd
As unperceived I hung upon their rear,)
Are close at hand, and mean to pass the night
Within the castle.

Frank. Some benighted travellers,
Bold from their numbers, or who ne'er have
 heard
The ghostly legend of this dreaded place.

1st Out. Let us keep close within our vaulted
 haunts ;
The way to which is tangled and perplex'd,
And cannot be discover'd : with the morn
They will depart.

Frank. Nay, by the holy mass ! within those
 walls .
Not for a night must trav'lers quietly rest,
Or few or many. Would we live securely,
We must uphold the terrors of the place :
Therefore, let us prepare our midnight rouse.
See, from the windows of the castle gleam

(*lights seen from the castle.*)

Quick passing lights, as tho' they moved within
In hurried preparation ; and that bell,

(*bell heard.*)

Which from yon turret its shill 'larum sends,
Betokens some unwonted stir. Come hearts !
Be all prepared, before the midnight watch,
The fiend-like din of our infernal chace
Around the walls to raise. — Come ; night
 advances. [EXEUNT.

SCENE II.

A Gothic Room in the Castle, with the Stage darkened ; enter CATHRINA, bearing a Light, followed by ORRA.

Or. (Catching her by the robe and pulling her back.)

Advance no further : turn, I pray ! This room
More dismal and more ghastly seems than that
Which we have left behind. Thy taper's light,
As thus aloft thou wav'st it to and fro,
The fretted ceiling gilds with feeble brightness ;
Whilst over-head its carved ribs glid past
Like edgy waves of a dark sea, returning
To an eclipsed moon its sullen sheen.

Cath. To me it seems less dismal than the other.

See, here are chairs around the table set,
As if its last inhabitants had left it
Scarcely an hour ago.

(Setting the light upon the table.)

Or. Alas ! how many hours and years have past

Since human forms have round this table sat,
Or lamp or taper on its surface gleam'd !
Methinks I hear the sound of time long past
Still murm'ring o'er us in the lofty void
Of those dark arches, like the ling'ring voices
Of those who long within their graves have slept.
It was their gloomy home ; now it is mine.

(Sits down, resting her arm upon the table, and covering her eyes with her hand.)

(*Enter RUDIGERE, beckoning CATHRINA to come to him ; and speaks to her in a low voice at the corner of the stage.*)

Go and prepare thy Lady's chamber ; why
Dost thou for ever closely near her keep ?

Cath. She charged me so to do :

Rud. I charge thee also,
With paramount authority, to leave her :
I for a while will take thy station here.

Thou art not mad ? Thou dost not hesitate ?

(*Fixing his eyes on her with a fierce threatening look, from which she shrinks.*)

[EXIT *Cath.*

Or. This was the home of bloody lawless
power.

The very air rests thick and heavily
Where murder hath been done.

(*Sighing heavily.*) There is a strange oppression
in my breast :

Dost thou not feel a close unwholesome vapour ?

Rud. No ; ev'ry air to me is light and healthful,
That with thy sweet and heavenly breath is
mix'd.

Or. (*starting up.*) Thou here !

(*Looking round.*) Cathrina gone ?

Rud. Does Orra fear to be alone with one,
Whose weal, whose being on her favour hangs ?

Or. Retire, Sir Knight. I chuse to be alone.

Rud. And dost thou chuse it, here, in such a
place,

Wearing so near the midnight hour ? — Alas !

How loath'd and irksome must my presence be !

Or. Dost thou deride my weakness ?

Rud. I deride it !

No, noble Maid ! say rather that from thee
I have a kindred weakness caught. In battle
My courage never shrunk, as my arm'd heel
And crested helm do fairly testify :
But now when midnight comes, I feel by sym-
pathy,

With thinking upon thee, fears rise within me
I never knew before.

Or. (*in a softened kindlier voice.*)

Ha ! dost thou too
Such human weakness own ?

Rud. I plainly feel

We are all creatures, in the wakeful hour
Of ghastly midnight, form'd to cower together,
Forgetting all distinctions of the day,
Beneath its awful and mysterious power.

(*Stealing closer to her as he speaks, and putting his arms round her.*)

Or. (*breaking from him.*)

I pray thee hold thy parley further off :
Why dost thou press so near me ?

Rud. And art thou so offended, lovely Orra ?
Ah ! wherefore am I thus presumptuous deem'd ?
The blood that fills thy veins enriches mine ;
From the same stock we spring ; tho' by that
glance

Of thy disdainful eye, too well I see
My birth erroneously thou countest base.

Or. Erroneously !

Rud. Yes, I will prove it so.

Longer I'll not endure a galling wrong
Which makes each word of tenderness that bursts
From a full heart, bold and presumptuous seem,
And severs us so far.

Or. No, subtile snake!
It is the baseness of thy selfish mind,
Full of all guile, and cunning, and deceit,
That severs us so far, and shall do ever.

Rud. Thou prov'st how far my passion will
endure
Unjust reproaches from a mouth so dear.

Or. Out on hypocrisy ! who but thyself
Did Hughobert advise to send me hither ?
And who the jailor's hateful office holds
To make my thralldom sure ?

Rud. Upbraid me not for this : had I refused,
One less thy friend had ta'en th' ungracious task.
And, gentle Orra ! dost thou know a man,
Who might in ward all that his soul holds dear
From danger keep, yet would the charge refuse,
For that strict right such wardship doth condemn ?

O ! still to be with thee ; to look upon thee ;
To hear thy voice, makes ev'n this place of
horrors, —

Where, as 'tis said, the spectre of a chief,
Slain by our common grandsire, haunts the
night,

A paradise — a place where I could live
In penury and gloom, and be most bless'd.

Ah ! Orra ! if there's misery in thralldom,
Pity a wretch who breathes but in thy favour :

Who till he look'd upon that beauteous face,
Was free and happy. — Pity me or kill me !

(Kneeling and catching hold of her hand.)

Or. Off, fiend ! let snakes and vipers cling
to me

So thou dost keep aloof.

Rud. *(rising indignantly.)*

And is my love with so much hatred met ?

Madam, beware lest scorn like this should change
me

Ev'n to the baleful thing your fears have fancied.

Or. Dar'st thou to threaten me ?

Rud. He, who is mad with love and gall'd
with scorn,

Dares any thing. — But O ! forgive such words
From one who rather, humbled at your feet,
Would of that gentleness, that gen'rous pity,
The native inmate of each female breast,
Receive the grace on which his life depends.
There was a time when thou did'st look on me
With other eyes.

Or. Thou dost amaze me much.
Whilst I believ'd thou wert an honest man,
Being no fool, and an adventurous soldier,
I look'd upon thee with good-will ; if more
Thou did'st discover in my looks than this,
Thy wisdom with thine honesty, in truth
Was fairly match'd.

Rud. Madam, the proud derision of that smile
Deceives me not. It is the Lord of Falkenstein,
Who better skill'd than I in tourney-war,
'Tho' not i' th' actual field more valiant found,

Engrosses now your partial thoughts. And yet
 What may he boast which, in a lover's suit,
 I may not urge? He's brave, and so am I.
 In birth I am his equal; for my mother,
 As I shall prove, was married to Count Albert,
 My noble father, tho' for reasons tedious
 Here to be stated, still their secret nuptials
 Were unacknowledged, and on me hath fallen
 A cruel stigma which degrades my fortunes.
 But were I—O forgive th' aspiring thought!—
 But were I Orra's Lord, I should break forth
 Like the unclouded sun, by all acknowledg'd
 As ranking with the highest in the land.

Or. Do what thou wilt when thou art Orra's
 Lord;

But being as thou art, retire and leave me :
 I chuse to be alone. *(Very proudly.)*

Rud. Then be it so.

Thy pleasure, mighty Dame, I will not balk.
 This night, to-morrow's night, and every night,
 Shalt thou in solitude be left; if absence
 Of human beings can secure it for thee.

*(Pauses and looks on her, while she seems
 struck and disturb'd.)*

It wears already on the midnight hour;
 Good night!

(Pauses again, she still more disturb'd.)

Perhaps I understood too hastily
 Commands you may retract.

Or. *(recovering her state.)*

Leave me, I say; that part of my commands
 I never can retract.

Rud.

You are obey'd.

[EXIT.

(Or. paces up and down hastily for some time, then stops short, and after remaining a little while in a thoughtful posture)

Can spirit from the tomb, or fiend from hell,
More hateful, more malignant be than man —
Than villanous man? Altho' to look on such,
Yea, even the very thought of looking on them,
Makes natural blood to curdle in the veins,
And loosen'd limbs to shake.

There are who have endur'd the visitation
Of supernatural Beings. — O forbend it!
I would close couch me to my deadliest foe
Rather than for a moment bear alone
The horrors of the sight.

Who's there? Who's there?

(looking round.)

Heard I not voices near? That door ajar
Sends forth a cheerful light. Perhaps my
women,

Who now prepare my chamber. Grant it be!

[EXIT, *running hastily to a door from which a light is seen.*

SCENE III.

A Chamber, with a small Bed or Couch in it; enter RUDIGERE and CATHRINA, wrangling together.

Rud. I say begone, and occupy the chamber
I have appointed for thee : here I'm fix'd,
And here I pass the night.

Cath. Thou said'st my chamber
Should be adjoining that which Orra holds?
I know thy wicked thoughts : they meditate
Some dev'lish scheme ; but think not I'll abet it.

Rud. Thou wilt not !— angry, restive, simple
fool !

Dost thou stop short and say, “ I'll go no further ? ”

Thou, whom concealed shame hath bound so
fast, —

My tool, — my instrument ? — Fulfil thy charge
To the full bent of thy commission, else
Thee, and thy bantling too, I'll from me cast
To want and infamy.

Cath. O shameless man !
Thou art the son of a degraded mother
As low as I am, yet thou hast no pity.

Rud. Aye, and dost thou reproach my bas-
tardy
To make more base the man who conquer'd thee,
With all thy virtue, rigid and demure ?
Who would have thought less than a sov'reign
Prince
Could e'er have compass'd such achievement ?
Mean

As he may be, thou'st given thyself a master,
And must obey him. — Dost thou yet resist ?
Thou know'st my meaning.

(*Tearing open his vest in vehemence of action.*)

Cath. Under thy vest a dagger !— Ah ! too well,
I know thy meaning, cruel, ruthless man !

Rud. Have I discover'd it?—I thought not of it :

The vehemence of gesture hath betray'd me.
I keep it not for thee, but for myself;
A refuge from disgrace. Here is another :
He who with high, but dangerous fortune
grapples,
Should he be foil'd, looks but to friends like
these.

(Pulling out two daggers from his vest.)

This steel is strong to give a vig'rous thrust;
The other on its venom'd point hath that
Which, in the feeblest hand, gives death as
certain,

As tho' a giant smote the destin'd prey.

Cath. Thou desp'rate man ! so arm'd against
thyself !

Rud. Aye; and against myself with such re-
solves,

Consider well how I shall deal with those
Who may withstand my will or mar my purpose.
Think'st thou I'll feebly ——

Cath. O be pacified.

I will be gone : I am a humbled wretch
On whom thou tramplest with a tyrant's cruelty.

[EXIT.

*(Rud. looks after her with a malignant laugh, and
then goes to the door of an adjoining chamber,
to the lock of which he applies his ear.)*

All still within. — I'm tired and heavy grown :
I'll lay me down to rest. She is secure :
No one can pass me here to gain her chamber.

If she hold parley now with any thing,
It must in truth be ghost or sprite.—Heigh ho!
I'm tir'd, and will to bed.

*(Lays himself on the couch and falls asleep.
The cry of hounds is then heard without at
a distance, with the sound of a horn; and
presently ORRA enters, bursting from the
door of the adjoining chamber, in great
alarm.)*

Or. Cathrina! sleepest thou? Awake!
Awake!

*(Running up to the couch and starting back
on seeing Rudigere.)*

That hateful viper here!
Is this my nightly guard? Detested wretch!
I will steal back again.

*(Walks softly on tiptoe to the door of her
chamber, when the cry of hounds, &c. is
again heard without, nearer than before.)*

O no! I dare not.

Tho' sleeping, and most hateful when awake,
Still he is natural life and may be 'waked.

(listening again.)

'Tis nearer now: that dismal thrilling blast!
I must awake him.

*(Approaching the couch and shrinking back
again.)*

O no! no, no!

Upon his face he wears a horrid smile
That speaks bad thoughts.

(Rud. speaks in his sleep.)

He mutters too my name.—

I dare not do it. (*Listening again.*)
 The dreadful sound is now upon the wind,
 Sullen and low, as if it wound its way
 Into the cavern'd earth that swallow'd it.
 I will abide in patient silence here ;
 Tho' hateful and asleep, I feel me still
 Near something of my kind.

(*Crosses her arms, and leans in a cowering posture over the back of a chair at a distance from the couch ; when presently the horn is heard without, louder than before, and she starts up.*)

O it returns ! as tho' the yawning earth
 Had given it up again, near to the walls.
 The horribly mingled din ! 'tis nearer still :
 'Tis close at hand : 'tis at the very gate !

(*running up to the couch.*)

Were he a murd'rer, clenching in his hands
 The bloody knife, I must awake him. — No !
 That face of dark and subtile wickedness !
 I dare not do it. (*listing again.*) Aye ; 'tis at
 the gate —
 Within the gate. —

What rushing blast is that
 Shaking the doors ? Some awful visitation
 Dread entrance makes ! O mighty God of
 Heaven !

A sound ascends the stairs.

Ho, Rudigere !

Awake, awake ! Ho ! Wake thee, Rudigere !

Rud. (*waking.*) What cry is that so terribly
 strong ? — Ha ! Orra !

What is the matter ?

Or. It is within the walls. Did'st thou not hear it ?

Rud. What ? The loud voice that call'd me ?

Or. No, it was mine.

Rud. It sounded in my ears
With more than human strength.

Or. Did it so sound ?
There is around us, in this midnight air,
A power surpassing nature. List, I pray :
Altho' more distant now, dost thou not hear
The yell of hounds ; the spectre-huntsman's
horn ?

Rud. I hear, indeed, a strangely mingled sound :
The wind is howling round the battlements.
But rest secure where safety is, sweet Orra !
Within these arms, nor man nor fiend shall harm
thee.

(Approaching her with a softened winning voice, while she pushes him off with abhorrence.)

Or. Vile reptile ! touch me not.

Rud. Ah ! Orra ! thou art warp'd by prejudice,
And taught to think me base ; but in my veins
Lives noble blood, which I will justify.

Or. But in thy heart, false traitor ! what lives
there ?

Rud. Alas ! thy angel-faultlessness conceives
not

The strong temptations of a soul impassion'd
Beyond controul of reason. — At thy feet —
(kneeling.)

O spurn me not.

(*Enter several Servants, alarmed.*)

Rud. What all these fools upon us! Staring
knaves,

What brings ye here at this untimely hour?

1st Serv. We have all heard it—'twas the yell
of hounds

And clatt'ring steeds, and the shrill horn be-
tween.

Rud. Out on such folly!

2d Serv. In very truth it pass'd close to the
walls;

Did not your honour hear it?

Rud. Ha! say'st thou so? thou art not wont
to join

In idle tales. — I'll to the battlements

And watch it there: it may return again.

[*EXEUNT severally, Rudigere followed by
Servants, and Orra into her own cham-
ber.*]

SCENE IV.

The Outlaws' Cave; enter THEOBALD.

Theo. (*looking round.*) Here is a place in
which some traces are

Of late inhabitants. In yonder nook

The embers faintly gleam, and on the walls

Hang spears and ancient arms: I must be right.

A figure thro' the gloom moves towards me.

Ho! there! Whoe'er you are: Holla! good friend!

Enter an Outlaw.

Out. A stranger ! Who art thou, who art thus
bold,
To hail us here unbidden ?

Theo. That thou shalt shortly know. Thou
art, I guess,
One of the Outlaws, who this forest haunt.

Out. Be thy conjecture right or wrong, no
more
Shalt thou return to tell where thou hast found
us.
Now for thy life !

(drawing his sword.)

Theo. Hear me, I do entreat thee.

Out. Nay, nay ! no foolish pleadings ; for thy
life
Is forfeit now ; have at thee !

*(Falls fiercely upon Theobald, who also
draws and defends himself bravely, when
another Outlaw enters and falls likewise
upon him. Theo. then recedes, fighting,
till he gets his back to the wall of the
cavern, and there defends himself stoutly.)*

Enter FRANKO.

Frank. Desist, I charge you ! Fighting with
a stranger,
Two swords to one — a solitary stranger !

1st Out. We are discover'd : had he master'd
me,
He had return'd to tell his mates above

What neighbours in these nether caves they have.
Let us dispatch him.

Frank. No, thou hateful butcher !
Dispatch a man alone and in our power !
Who art thou, stranger, who dost use thy sword
With no mean skill ; and in this perilous case
So bold an air and countenance maintainest ?
What brought thee hither ?

Theo. My name is Theobald of Falkenstein ;
To find the valiant Captain of these bands,
And crave assistance of his gen'rous arm :
This is my business here.

Frank. (*struck and agitated, to his men.*)
Go, join your comrades in the further cave.

[EXEUNT Outlaws.]

And thou art Falkenstein ? In truth thou art.
And who think'st thou am I ?

Theo. Franco, the gen'rous leader of those
Outlaws.

Frank. So am I call'd, and by that name alone
They know me. Sporting on the mountain's
side,

Where Garva's wood waves green, in other days,
Some fifteen years ago, they call'd me Albert.

Theo. (*rushing into his arms.*)

Albert ; my play-mate Albert ! Woe the day !
What cruel fortune drove thee to this state ?

Frank. I'll tell thee all ; but tell thou first to
me

What is the aid thou camest here to ask.

Theo. Aye, thou wert ever thus : still forward
bent

To serve, not to be serv'd.

But wave we this.

Last night a Lady to the castle came,
In thralldom by a villain kept, whom I
Ev'n with my life would rescue. Of arm'd force
At present destitute, I come to thee
Craving thy aid in counsel and in arms.

Frank. When did'st thou learn that Outlaws
harbour here,

For 'tis but lately we have held these haunts ?

Theo. Not till within the precincts of the
forest,

Following the traces of that villain's course,
One of your band I met, and recogniz'd
As an old soldier, who, some few years back,
Had under my command right bravely serv'd.
Seeing himself discover'd, and encouraged
By what I told him of my story, freely
He offer'd to conduct me to his captain.
But in a tangled path some space before me,
Alarm'd at sight of spearmen thro' the brake,
He started from his way, and so I miss'd him,
Making, to gain your cave, my way alone.

Frank. Thou'rt welcome here : and gladly
I'll assist thee,

Tho' not by arms, the force within the castle
So far out-numbering mine.

But other means may serve thy purpose better.

Theo. What other means, I pray ?

Frank. From these low caves, a passage under
ground

Leads to the castle—to the very tower

Where, as I guess, the Lady is confin'd.
When sleep has still'd the house, we'll make our
way.

Theo. Aye, by my faith it is a noble plan!
Guarded or not we well may overcome
The few that may compose her midnight guard.

Frank. We shall not shrink from that. —

But by my fay!

To-morrow is St. Michael's Eve : 'twere well
To be the spectre-huntsman for a night,
And bear her off, without pursuit or hindrance.

Theo. I comprehend thee not.

Frank. Thou shalt ere long.

But stand not here; an inner room I have,
Where thou shalt rest and some refreshment
take,

And then we will more fully talk of this,
Which, slightly mention'd, seems chimerical.
Follow me.

(Turning to him as they go out.)

Hast thou still upon thine arm
That mark which from mine arrow thou re-
ceiv'dst

When sportively we shot? The wound was
deep,

And gall'd thee much, but thou mad'st light of
it.

Theo. Yes, here it is. *(Pulling up his sleeve
as they go out, and EXEUNT.)*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Ramparts of the Castle. Enter ORRA and CATHRINA.*

Cath. (after a pause in which Orra walks once or twice across the stage, thoughtfully.)

GO in, I pray ; thou wand'rest here too long.

(A pause again.)

The air is cold ; behind those further mountains
The sun is set. I pray thee now go in.

Or. Ha ! sets the sun already ? Is the day
Indeed drawn to its close ?

Cath. Yes, night approaches.
See, many a gather'd flock of cawing rooks
Are to their nests returning.

Or. (solemnly.) Night approaches !—
This awful night which living beings shrink
from ;

All now of every kind scour to their haunts,
While darkness, peopled with its hosts unknown,
Awful dominion holds. Mysterious night !
What things unutterable thy dark hours
May lap !—What from thy teeming darkness
burst

Of horrid visitations, ere that sun
Again shall rise on the enlighten'd earth !

(A pause.)

Cath. Why dost thou gaze intently on the sky ?
See'st thou aught wonderful ?

Or. Look there ; behold that strange gigantic form

Which yon grim cloud assumes ; rearing aloft
The semblance of a warrior's plumed head,
While from its half-shaped arm a streamy dart
Shoots angrily ? Behind him, too, far stretch'd,
Seems there not, verily, a seried line
Of fainter misty forms ?

Cath. I see, indeed,

A vasty cloud, of many clouds composed,
Towering above the rest ; and that behind
In misty faintness seen, which hath some likeness
To a long line of rocks with pine-wood crown'd :
Or, if indeed the fancy so incline,
A file of spearmen, seen thro' drifted smoke.

Or. Nay, look how perfect now the form becomes :

Dost thou not see ? — Aye, and more perfect still.

O thou gigantic Lord, whose robed limbs
Beneath their stride span half the heavens ! art thou

Of lifeless vapour form'd ? Art thou not rather
Some air-clad spirit — some portentous thing —
Some mission'd Being ? — Such a sky as this
Ne'er usher'd in a night of nature's rest.

Cath. Nay, many such I've seen ; regard it not.
That form, already changing, will ere long
Dissolve to nothing. Tarry here no longer.
Go in, I pray.

Or. No ; while one gleam remains
Of the sun's blessed light, I will not go.

Cath. Then let me fetch a cloak to keep thee
warm,
For chilly blows the breeze.

Or. Do as thou wilt.
[EXIT *Cath.*

Enter an Outlaw, stealing softly behind her.

Out. (in a low voice.) Lady!—the Lady Orra!

Or. (starting.) Heaven protect me!
Sounds it beneath my feet, in earth or air?
(*He comes forward.*)

Welcome is aught that wears a human face.

Did'st thou not hear a sound?

Out. What sound, an't please you?

Or. A voice which call'd me now: it spoke,
methought,
In a low, hollow tone, suppress'd and low,
Unlike a human voice.

Out. It was my own.

Or. What would'st thou have?

Out. Here is a letter, Lady.

Or. Who sent thee hither?

Out. It will tell thee all. (*Gives a letter.*)
I must be gone, your chieftain is at hand.

[EXIT.

Or. Comes it from Falkenstein? It is his seal.
I may not read it here. I'll to my chamber.

[EXIT *hastily, not perceiving Rudigere,*
who enters by the opposite side, before
she has time to get off.

Rud. A letter in her hand, and in such haste !
Some secret agent here from Falkenstein ?
It must be so. (*Hastening after her, EXIT.*)

SCENE II.

*The Outlaws' Cave ; enter THEOBALD and
FRANKO by opposite sides.*

Theo. How now, good Captain ; draws it near
the time ?
Are those the keys ?

Frank. They are : this doth unlock
The entrance to the staircase, known alone
To Gomez, ancient keeper of the castle,
Who is my friend in secret, and deters
The neighb'ring peasantry with dreadful tales
From visiting by night our wide domains.
The other doth unlock a secret door,
That leads us to the chamber where she sleeps.

Theo. Thanks, gen'rous friend ! thou art my
better genius.
Did'st thou not say, until the midnight horn
Hath sounded thrice, we must remain conceal'd ?

Frank. Even so. And now I hear my men
without
Telling the second watch.

Theo. How looks the night ?

Frank. As we could wish : the stars do faintly
twinkle
Thro' sever'd clouds, and shed but light suffi-
cient
To shew each nearer object closing on you

In dim unshapely blackness. Aught that moves
Across your path, or sheep or straggling goat,
Is now a pawing steed or grizzly bull,
Large and terrific ; every air-mov'd bush
Or jutting crag, some strange gigantic thing.

Theo. Is all still in the castle ?

Frank. There is an owl sits hooting on the
tower,

That answer from a distant mate receives,
Like the faint echo of his dismal cry ;
While a poor houseless dog, by dreary fits,
Sits howling at the gate. All else is still.

Theo. Each petty circumstance is in our fa-
vour,

That makes the night more dismal.

Frank. Aye, all goes well : as I approach'd
the walls,

I heard two centinels — for now I ween,
The boldest spearman will not watch alone —
Together talk in the deep hollow voice
Of those who speak at midnight, under awe
Of the dead stillness round them.

Theo. Then let us put ourselves in readiness,
And heaven's good favour guide us !

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE III.

A gloomy Apartment ; enter ORRA and RUDIGERE.

Or. (aside.) The room is darken'd : yesternight
a lamp

Did shed its light around on roof and walls,
And made the dreary space appear less dismal.

Rud. (*overhearing her, and calling to a Servant without.*)

Ho! more lights here!

(*Servant enters with a light, and EXIT.*)

Thou art obey'd: in aught
But in the company of human kind,
Thou shalt be gratified. Thy lofty mind
For higher super-human fellowship,
If such there be, may now prepare it's strength.

Or. Thou ruthless tyrant! They who have in
battle

Fought valiantly, shrink like a helpless child
From any intercourse with things unearthly.
Art thou a man? And bear'st thou in thy breast
The feelings of a man? It cannot be!

Rud. Yes, madam; in my breast I bear too
keenly

The feelings of a man — a man most wretched:
A scorn'd, rejected man. — Make me less miser-
able;

Nay rather should I say, make me most blest;
And then — (*attempting to take her hand, while
she steps back from him, drawing herself
up with an air stately and determined, and
looking stedfastly in his face.*)

I too am firm. Thou know'st my fix'd resolve:
Give me thy solemn promise to be mine.

This is the price, thou haughty, scornful
maid,

That will redeem thee from the hour of ter-
rour!

This is the price —

Or. Which never shall be paid.

(Walks from him to the further end of the apartment.)

Rud. *(after a pause.)* Thou art determin'd then.

Be not so rash :

Bethink thee well what flesh and blood can bear :
The hour is near at hand.

(She, turning round, waves him with her hand to leave her.)

Thou deign'st no answer.

Well ; reap the fruits of thine unconquer'd
pride. [EXIT.

Manet ORRA.

Or. I am alone : that closing door divides
me

From ev'ry being owning nature's life. —

And shall I be constrain'd to hold communion
With that which owns it not ?

(After pacing to and fro for a little while.)

O that my mind
Could raise its thoughts in strong and steady
fervour

To HIM, the Lord of all existing things,

Who lives, and is where'er existence is ;

Grasping its hold upon His skirted robe,

Beneath whose mighty rule Angels and Spirits,

Demons and nether powers, all living things,

Hosts of the earth, with the departed dead

In their dark state of mystery, alike

Subjected are ! — And I will strongly do it. —

Ah ! would I could ! Some hidden powerful
hindrance

Doth hold me back, and mars all thought.—

(After a pause, in which she stands fixed with her arms crossed on her breast.)

Dread intercourse !

O ! if it look on me with its dead eyes !

If it should move its lock'd and earthy lips,

And utt'rance give to the grave's hollow sounds !

If it stretch forth its cold and bony grasp —

O horror, horror !

(Sinking lower at every successive idea, as she repeats these four last lines, till she is quite upon her knees on the ground.)

Would that beneath these planks of senseless matter

I could, until the dreadful hour is past,

As senseless be ! *(striking the floor with her hands.)*

O open and receive me,

Ye happy things of still and lifeless being,

That to the awful steps which tread upon ye

Unconscious are !

Enter CATHRINA behind her.

Who's there ? Is't any thing ?

Cath. 'Tis I, my dearest Lady ; 'tis Cathrina.

Or. *(embracing her.)* How kind ! such blessed kindness ! keep thee by me ;

I'll hold thee fast ; an angel brought thee hither.

I needs must weep to think thou art so kind

In mine extremity.—Where wert thou hid ?

Cath. In that small closet, since the supper hour,

I've been conceal'd. For searching round the chamber,

I found its door, and enter'd. Fear not now,
I will not leave thee till the break of day.

Or. Heaven bless thee for it ! Till the break
of day !

The very thought of day-break gives me life.
If but this night were past, I have good hope
That noble Theobald will soon be here
For my deliv'rance.

Cath. Wherefore think'st thou so ?

Or. A stranger, when thou left'st me on the
ramparts,

Gave me a letter, which I quickly open'd,
As soon as I, methought, had gain'd my room
In privacy ; but close behind me came
That dæmon, Rudigere, and, snatching at it,
Forced me to cast it to the flames, from which,
I struggling with him still, he could not save it.

Cath. You have not read it then.

Or. No ; but the seal
Was Theobald's, and I could swear ere long
He will be here to free me from this thralldom.

Cath. God grant he may !

Or. If but this night were past ! How goes
the time ?

Has it not enter'd on the midnight watch ?

Cath. (*pointing to a small slab at the corner of
the stage on which is placed a sand-glass.*)

That glass I've set to measure it. As soon
As all the sand is run, you are secure ;
The midnight watch is past.

Or. (*running to the glass, and looking at it
eagerly.*)

There is not much to run : O an't were finish'd!
But it so slowly runs !

Cath. Yes ; watching it,
It seemeth slow. But heed it not ; the while,
I'll tell thee some old tale, and ere I've finish'd,
The midnight watch is gone. Sit down, I pray.

(*They sit, Orra drawing her chair close to Cathrina.*)

What story shall I tell thee ?

Or. Something, my friend, which thou thyself hast known,
Touching the awful intercourse which spirits
With mortal men have held at this dread hour.
Did'st thou thyself e'er meet with one whose
eyes

Had look'd upon the spectred dead — had seen
Forms from another world ?

Cath. Never but once.

Or. (*eagerly.*) Once then thou did'st. O tell
it ! tell it me !

Cath. Well, since I needs must tell it, once I
knew

A melancholy man, who did aver,
That journeying on a time o'er a wild waste,
By a fell storm o'erta'en, he was compell'd
To pass the night in a deserted tower,
Where a poor hind, the sole inhabitant
Of the sad place, prepared for him a bed :
And, as he told his tale, at dead of night,
By the pale lamp that in his chamber burn'd,
As it might be an arm's-length from his bed —

Or. So close upon him ?

Cath. Yes.

Or. Go on ; what saw he ?

Cath. An upright form, wound in a clotted shroud —

Clotted and stiff, like one swaith'd up in haste
After a bloody death.

Or. O horrible !

Cath. He started from his bed, and gaz'd upon it.

Or. And did he speak to it ?

Cath. He could not speak.

Its visage was uncover'd, and at first
Seem'd fix'd and shrunk, like one in coffin'd sleep ;

But, as he gaz'd, there came, he wist not how,
Into its beamless eyes a horrid glare,
And turning towards him, for it did move —
Why dost thou grasp me thus ?

Or. Go on, go on !

Cath. Nay, heaven forbend ! Thy shrunk and sharpen'd features

Are of the corse's colour, and thine eyes
Are full of tears. How's this ?

Or. I know not how.

A horrid sympathy jarr'd on my heart,
And forc'd into mine eyes these icy tears.
A fearful kindredship there is between
The living and the dead — an awful bond !
Wo's me ! that we do shudder at ourselves —
At that which we must be ! — A dismal
thought !

Where dost thou run ? thy story is not told.

(*Seeing Cath. go towards the sand-glass.*)

Cath. (*shewing the glass.*) A better story I will
tell thee now ;

The midnight watch is past.

Or. Ha ! let me see.

Cath. There's not one sand to run.

Or. But it is barely past.

Cath. 'Tis more than past.

For I did set it later than the hour,

To be assur'dly sure.

Or. Then it is gone indeed. O heaven be
praised !

The fearful gloom gone by !

(*Holding up her hands in gratitude to heaven, and then looking round her with cheerful animation.*)

In truth, already

I feel as if I breath'd the morning air :

I'm marvellously lighten'd.

Cath. Ne'ertheless,

Thou art forspent : I'll run to my apartment,
And fetch some cordial drops that will revive
thee.

Or. Thou need'st not go ; I've ta'en thy
drops already :

I'm bold and buoyant grown.

(*Bounding lightly from the floor.*)

Cath. I'll soon return :

Thou art not fearful now ?

Or. No ; I breathe lightly ;

Valour within me grows most powerfully,

Would'st thou but stay to see it, gentle Cathrine.

Cath. I will return to see it, ere thou canst
Three times repeat the letters of thy name.

[*EXIT hastily by the concealed door.*

Or. (*alone.*) This burst of courage shrinks
most shamefully.

I'll follow her. — (*Striving to open the door.*)

'Tis fast : it will not open.

I'll count my footsteps as I pace the floor
Till she return again.

(*Paces up and down, muttering to herself,
when a horn is heard without, pausing and
sounding three times, each time louder than
before.*)

(*Orra runs again to the door.*)

Despair will give me strength : where is the
door ?

Mine eyes are dark, I cannot find it now.

O God ! protect me in this awful pass !

(*After a pause, in which she stands with her
body bent in a cowering posture, with her
hands locked together, and trembling vio-
lently, she starts up and looks wildly round
her.*)

There's nothing, yet I felt a chilly hand
Upon my shoulder press'd. With open'd eyes
And ears intent I'll stand. Better it is
Thus to abide the awful visitation,
Than cower in blinded horror, strain'd in-
tensely

With ev'ry beating of my goaded heart.

(*Looking round her with a steady sternness,
but shrinking again almost immediately.*)

I cannot do it: on this spot I'll hold me
In awful stillness.

(Bending her body as before; then, after a momentary pause, pressing both her hands upon her head.)

The icy scalp of fear is on my head;
The life stirs in my hair; it is a sense
That tells the nearing of unearthly steps,
Albeit my ringing ears no sounds distinguish.

(Looking round, as if by irresistible impulse, to a great door at the bottom of the stage, which bursts open, and the form of a huntsman, cloathed in black, with a horn in his hand, enters and advances towards her. She utters a loud shriek, and falls senseless on the ground.)

Theo. (running up to her, and raising her from the ground.)

No semblance, but real agony of fear.

Orra, oh, Orra! know'st thou not my voice?

Thy knight, thy champion, the devoted Theobald?

Open thine eyes and look upon my face:

(Unmasking.)

I am no fearful waker from the grave.

Dost thou not feel? 'Tis the warm touch of life.

Look up, and fear will vanish.— Words are vain!

What a pale countenance of ghastly strength

By horror chang'd! O idiot that I was,

To hazard this! — The villain hath deceiv'd me:

My letter she has ne'er received. O fool!

That I should trust to this!

(Beating his head distractedly.)

Enter FRANKO, by the same door.

Frank. What is the matter? what strange turn is this?

Theo. O cursed sanguine fool! could I not think —

She moves, she moves! — rouse thee, my gentle Orra!

'Tis no strange voice that calls thee; 'tis thy friend.

Frank. She opens now her eyes.

Theo. But, oh, that look!

Frank. She knows thee not, but gives a stifled groan,

And sinks again in stupor.

Make no more fruitless lamentation here,

But bear her hence: the cool and open air

May soon restore her. Let us, while we may,

Occasion seize, lest we should be surprised.

[*EXEUNT, Orra borne off in a state of insensibility.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I. — *The great Hall of the Castle.*

*Enter RUDIGERE, CATHRINA, and Attendants,
by different Doors.*

Rud. (to Attend.) Return'd again! Is any
thing discover'd?

Or door or passage, garment dropt in haste,
Or footstep's track, or any mark of flight?

1st Att. No, by my faith! tho' from its high-
est turrets

To its deep vaults, the castle we have search'd.

Cath. 'Tis vain to trace the marks of trackless
feet.

If that in truth it hath convey'd her hence,
The yawning earth has yielded them a passage,
Or else, thro' rifted roofs, the buoyant air.

Rud. Fools! search again. I'll raze the very
walls

From their foundations, but I will discover
If door or pass there be to us unknown.

Ho! Gomez, there! (*Calling off the stage.*)

He keeps himself aloof.

Nor aids the search with true and hearty will.

I am betray'd. — Ho! Gomez, there, I say!

He shrinks away: go, drag the villain hither,

And let the torture wring confession from him.

(*A loud knocking heard at the gate.*)

Ha! who seeks entrance at this early hour
In such a desert place?

Cath. Some hind, perhaps,
Who brings intelligence. Heaven grant it be!

Enter an armed Vassal.

Rud. Ha! one from Aldenberg! What brings
thee hither?

Vass. (*seizing Rud.*) Thou art my prisoner.
(*To Attendants.*) Upon your peril,
Assist me to secure him.

Rud. Audacious hind! by what authority
Speak'st thou such bold commands? Produce
thy warrant.

Vass. 'Tis at the gate, and such as thou must
yield to :
Count Hughobert himself, with armed men,
A goodly band, his pleasure to enforce.
(*Secures him.*)

Rud. What sudden freak is this? am I
suspected
Of aught but true and honourable faith?

Vass. Aye, by our holy Saints! more than
suspected.
Thy creature Maurice, whom thou thought'st to
bribe
With things of seeming value, hath discover'd
The cunning fraud; on which his tender con-
science,
Good soul! did o'the sudden so upbraid him,
That to his Lord forthwith he made confes-
sion

Of all the plots against the Lady Orra,
In which thy wicked arts had tempted him
To take a wicked part. All is discover'd.

Cath. (aside.) All is discover'd! Where then
shall I hide me?

(Aloud to Vass.) What is discover'd?

Vass. Ha! most virtuous Lady!
Art thou alarm'd? Fear not: the world well
knows

How good thou art; and to the Countess shortly,
Who with her Lord is near, thou wilt no doubt
Give good account of all that thou hast done.

Cath. (aside, as she retires in agitation.)
O heaven forbid! What hole o' th' earth will
hide me! [EXIT.

*(Enter by the opposite side, HUGHOBERT,
ELEANORA, ALICE, GLOTTENBAL, URSTON,
MAURICE, and Attendants.)*

Hug. (speaking as he enters.) Is he secured?

Vass. He is, my Lord; behold!

(pointing to Rud.)

Hugh. (to Rud.) Black artful traitor! Of a
sacred trust,
Blindly reposed in thee, the base betrayer
For wicked ends; full well upon the ground
May'st thou decline those darkly frowning eyes,
And gnaw thy lip in shame.

Rud. And rests no shame with him, whose
easy faith

Entrusts a man unproved ; or, having proved
him,

Lets a poor hireling's unsupported testimony
Shake the firm confidence of many years ?

Hugh. Here the accuser stands ; confront
him boldly,
And spare him not.

(Bringing forward Maurice.)

Maur. (to Rud.) Deny it if thou canst. Thy
brazen front,
All brazen as it is, denies it not.

Rud. (to Mau.) Fool ! that of prying curiosity
And av'rice art compounded ! I in truth
Did give to thee a counterfeited treasure
To bribe thee to a counterfeited trust ;
Meet recompence ! Ha, ha ! Maintain thy
tale,

For I deny it not. *(With careless derision.)*

Maur. O subtile traitor !
Dost thou so varnish it with seeming mirth ?

Hugh. Sir Rudigere, thou dost, I must confess,
Out-face him well. But call the Lady Orra ;
If towards her thou hast thyself comported
In honesty, she will declare it freely.

Bring Orra hither. *(To Attendant.)*

1st Attend. Would that we could ; last night
i' the midnight watch

She disappear'd ; but whether man or devil
Hath borne her hence, in truth we cannot tell.

Hugh. O both ! Both man and devil together
join'd.

(*To Rud. furiously.*) Fiend, villain, murderer !
Produce her instantly.

Dead or alive, produce thy hapless charge.

Rud. Restrain your rage, my Lord ; I would
right gladly

Obeys you, were it possible : the place,
And the mysterious means of her retreat,
Are both to me unknown.

Hugh. Thou liest ! thou liest !

Glott. (*coming forward.*) Thou liest, beast, villain,
traitor ! think'st thou still

To fool us thus ? Thou shalt be forced to speak.

(*To Hugh.*) Why lose we time in words when
other means

Will quickly work ? Straight to those pillars
bind him,

And let each sturdy varlet of your train
Inflict correction on him.

Maur. Aye, this alone will move him.

Hugh. Thou say'st well :

By heaven it shall be done !

Rud. And will Count Hughobert degrade in
me

The blood of Aldenberg to shame himself ?

Hugh. That plea avails thee not ; thy spurious
birth

Gives us full warrant, as thy conduct varies,
To reckon thee or noble or debased.

(*To Att.*) Straight bind the traitor to the place
of shame.

(*As they are struggling to bind Rud. he gets
one of his hands free, and, pulling out a*

dagger from under his clothes, stabs himself.)

Rud. Now, take your will of me, and drag
my corse

Thro' mire and dust ; your shameless fury now
Can do me no disgrace.

Urston. (advancing.)

Rash, daring, thoughtless wretch ! dost thou so
close

A wicked life in hardy desperation ?

Rud. Priest, spare thy words : I add not to
my sins

That of presumption, in pretending now
To offer up to Heaven the forced repentance
Of some short moments for a life of crimes.

Urst. My son, thou dost mistake me : let thy
heart

Confession make ———

Glott. (interrupting Urst.) Yes, dog ! Confes-
sion make

Of what thou'st done with Orra ; else I'll spurn
thee,

And cast thy hateful carcase to the kites.

*Hugh. (pulling back Glott. as he is going to
spurn Rud. with his foot, who is now fallen
upon the ground.)*

Nay, nay, forbear ; such outrage is unmanly.

*(Eleanora, who with Alice had retired from the
shocking sight of Rudigere, now comes
forward to him.)*

El. Oh, Rudigere ! thou art a dying man,
And we will speak to thee without upbraiding.
Confess, I do entreat thee, ere thou goest

To thy most awful change, and leave us not
In this our horrible uncertainty.

Is Orra here conceal'd ?

Al. Thou hast not slain her ?
Confession make, and heaven have mercy on
thee !

Rud. Yes, Ladies ; with these words of gentle
meekness
My heart is changed ; and that you may per-
ceive

How greatly changed, let Glottenbal approach
me ;

Spent am I now, and can but faintly speak —
Ev'n unto him in token of forgiveness,
I'll tell what ye desire.

El. Thank heaven, thou art so changed !

Hugh. (*to Glot.*) Go to him, boy.

(*Glottenbal goes to Rudigere, and stooping
over him to hear what he has to say,
Rudigere, taking a small dagger from his
bosom, strikes Glottenbal on the neck.*)

Glot. Oh, he has wounded me ! — Detested
traitor !

Take that and that ; would thou had'st still a
life

For every thrust. (*Killing him.*)

Hugh. (*alarmed.*) Ha ! has he wounded thee,
my son ?

Glot. A scratch ;
'Tis nothing more. He aim'd it at my throat,
But had not strength to thrust.

Hugh. Thank God, he had not !

(A trumpet sounds without.)

Hark ! martial notice of some high approach !

(To Attendants.) Go to the gate.

[EXEUNT Attendants.]

El. Who may it be ? This castle is remote
From every route which armed leaders take.

Enter a Servant.

Ser. The banneret of Basle is at the gate.

Hugh. Is he in force ?

Ser. Yes, thro' the trees his distant bands are
seen

Some hundreds strong, I guess ; tho' with himself
Two followers only come.

Enter HARTMAN attended.

Hugh. Forgive me, banneret, if I receive thee
With more surprise than courtesy. How is it ?
Com'st thou in peace.

Hart. To you, my Lord, I frankly will declare
The purpose of my coming : having heard it,
It is for you to say if I am come,
As much I wish, in peace.

(To El.) Countess, your presence much em-
boldens me

To think it so shall be.

Hugh. (impatiently.) Proceed, I beg.
When burghers gentle courtesy affect,
It chafes me more than all their sturdy boast-
ing.

Hart. Then with a burgher's plainness, Hughobert,

I'll try my tale to tell, — nice task I fear !
So that it may not gall a baron's pride.
Brave Theobald, the Lord of Falkenstein,
Co-burgher also of our ancient city,
Whose cause of course is ours, declares himself
The suitor of thy ward, the Lady Orra ;
And learning that within these walls she is,
By thine authority, in durance kept,
In his behalf I come to set her free ;
As an oppressed Dame, such service claiming
From every gen'rous knight. What is thy
answer ?

Say, am I come in peace ? Wilt thou release
her ?

Hugh. Ah, would I could ! In faith thou
gall'st me shrewdly.

Hart. I've been inform'd of all that now disturbs you,
By one who held me waiting at the gate.
Until the maid be found, if 'tis your pleasure,
Cease enmity.

Hugh. Then let it cease. A traitor has deceived me,
And there he lies.

(*Pointing to the body of Rud.*)

Hart. (*looking at the body.*)
A ghastly smile of fell malignity
On his distorted face death has arrested.

(*Turning again to Hugh.*)

And has he died, and no confession made ?

All means that may discover Orra's fate
Shut from us ?

Hugh. Ah ! the fiend hath utter'd nothing
That could betray his secret. If she lives ——

El. Alas, alas ! think you he murder'd her ?

Al. Merciful heaven forefend !

Enter a Soldier in haste.

Sold. O, I have heard a voice, a dismal
voice !

Omnes. What hast thou heard ?

El. What voice ?

Sold. The Lady Orra's.

El. Where ? Lead us to the place.

Hugh. Where did'st thou hear it, Soldier ?

Sold. In a deep-tangled thicket of the wood,
Close to a ruin'd wall, o'ergrown with ivy,
That marks the ancient out-works of the castle.

Hugh. Haste ; lead the way.

[*EXEUNT all eagerly, without order, following the Soldier, Glottenbal and one Attendant excepted.*]

Att. You do not go, my Lord ?

Glott. I'm sick, and strangely dizzy grows my
head,

And pains shoot from my wound. It is a scratch,
But from a devil's fang. — There's mischief in it.
Give me thine arm, and lead me to a couch :
I'm very faint.

Att. This way, my Lord, there is a chamber
near.

[*EXEUNT Glottenbal, supported by the Attendant.*]

SCENE II.

The Forest near the Castle ; in front a rocky Bank crowned with a ruined Wall o'ergrown with Ivy, and the Mouth of a Cavern shaded with Bushes : Enter FRANCO, conducting HUGHOBERT, HARTMAN, ELEONORA, ALICE, and URSTON, the Soldier following them.

Frank. (to Hugh.) This is the entry to our secret haunts.

And now, my Lord, having inform'd you truly
Of the device, well meant, but most unhappy,
By which the Lady Orra from her prison
By Falkenstein was ta'en, myself, my outlaws,
Unhappy men—who better days have seen,
Drove to this lawless life by hard necessity,
Are on your mercy cast.

Hugh. Which shall not fail you, valiant Franko.
Much

Am I indebted to thee : had'st thou not
Of thine own free good will become our guide,
As wand'ring here thou found'st us, we had
ne'er

The spot discover'd ; for this honest soldier,
A stranger to the forest, sought in vain
To thread the tangled path.

El. (to Frank.) She is not well thou say'st,
and from her swoon
Imperfectly recover'd.

Frank. When I left her,
She so appear'd.—But enter not, I pray,

Till I give notice. — Holla, you within!
Come forth and fear no ill.

(A shriek heard from the cave.)

Omnes. What dismal shriek is that?

Al. 'Tis Orra's voice.

El. No, no! it cannot be! It is some wretch,
In maniac's fetters bound.

Hart. The horrid thought that bursts into
my mind!

Forbid it, righteous Heaven!

*(Running into the cave, he is prevented by
Theobald, who rushes out upon him.)*

Theo. Hold, hold! no entry here but o'er my
corse,

When ye have master'd me.

Hart. My Theobald
Dost thou not know thy friends?

Theo. Ha! thou, my Hartman! Art thou
come to me?

Hart. Yes, I am come. What means that
look of anguish?

She is not dead!

Theo. Oh, no! it is not death!

Hart. What mean'st thou? Is she well?

Theo. Her body is.

Hart. And not her mind? ——— Oh! direst
wreck of all!

That noble mind! ——— But 'tis some passing
seizure,

Some powerful movement of a transient nature;
It is not madness?

Theo. (shrinking from him, and bursting into tears.)

'Tis heaven's infliction ; let us call it so ;
Give it no other name. *(Covering his face.)*

El. (to Theo.) Nay, do not thus despair : when
she beholds us,
She'll know her friends, and, by our kindly
soothing,
Be gradually restored.

Al. Let me go to her.

Theo. Nay, forbear, I pray thee ;
I will myself with thee, my worthy Hartman,
Go in and lead her forth.

(Theobald and Hartman go into the cavern, while those without wait in deep silence, which is only broken once or twice by a scream from the cavern and the sound of Theobald's voice speaking soothingly, till they return, leading forth Orra, with her hair and dress disordered, and the appearance of wild distraction in her gait and countenance.)

Or. (shrinking back as she comes from under the shade of the trees, &c. and dragging Theobald and Hartman back with her.)

Come back, come back ! The fierce and fiery
light !

Theo. Shrink not, dear love ! it is the light
of day.

Or. Have cocks crow'd yet ?

Theo. Yes ; twice I've heard already
Their matten sound. Look up to the blue sky ;

Is it not day-light there? And these green
boughs

Are fresh and fragrant round thee : every sense
Tells thee it is the cheerful early day.

Or. Aye, so it is ; day takes his daily turn,
Rising between the gulphy dells of night
Like whiten'd billows on a gloomy sea ;
Till glow-worms gleam, and stars peep thro' the
dark,
And will-o'-the-wisp his dancing taper light,
They will not come again.

(Bending her ear to the ground)

Hark, hark ! Aye, hark :
They are all there : I hear their hollow sound
Full many a fathom down.

Theo. Be still, 'poor troubled soul ! they'll
ne'er return :

They are for ever gone. Be well assured
Thou shalt from henceforth have a cheerful
home

With crackling faggots on thy midnight fire,
Blazing like day around thee ; and thy friends —
Thy living, loving friends still by thy side,
To speak to thee and cheer thee.—See, my
Orra !

They are beside thee now ; dost thou not know
them ? *(Pointing to Eleanora and Alice.)*

Or. *(gazing at them with her hand held up to
shade her eyes.)*

No, no ! athwart the wav'ring garish light,
Things move and seem to be, and yet are no-
thing.

El. (*going near her.*) My gentle Orra! hast thou then forgot me?

Dost thou not know my voice?

Or. 'Tis like an old tune to my ear return'd.
For there be those, who sit in cheerful halls,
And breathe sweet air, and speak with pleasant
sounds ;

And once I liv'd with such ; some years gone
by ;

I wot not now how long.

Hugh. Keen words that rend my heart! —
Thou had'st a home,
And one whose faith was pledged for thy protection.

Urst. Be more composed, my Lord, some faint
remembrance
Returns upon her with the well-known sound
Of voices once familiar to her ear.
Let Alice sing to her some fav'rite tune,
That may lost thoughts recall.

(*Alice sings an old tune, and Orra, who
listens eagerly and gazes on her while she
sings, afterwards bursts into a wild laugh.*)

Or. Ha, ha! the witch'd air sings for thee
bravely.

Hoot owls thro' mantling fog for matten birds?
It lures not me. — I know thee well enough :
The bones of murder'd men thy measure beat,
And fleshless heads nod to thee. — Off, I say!
Why are ye here? — That is the blessed sun.

El. Ah, Orra! do not look upon us thus!
These are the voices of thy loving friends

That speak to thee : this is a friendly hand
That presses thine so kindly.

*(Putting her hand upon Orra's, who gives
a loud shriek, and shrinks from her with
horror.)*

Hart. O grievous state. *(Going up to her.)*
What terror seizes thee ?

Or. Take it away ! It was the swathed dead !
I know its clammy, chill, and bony touch.

(Fixing her eyes fiercely on Eleanora.)
Come not again ; I'm strong and terrible now :
Mine eyes have look'd upon all dreadful things ;
And when the earth yawns, and the hell-blast
sounds,

I'll 'bide the trooping of unearthly steps
With stiff-clench'd, terrible strength.

*(Holding her clenched hands over her head
with an air of grandeur and defiance.)*

Hugh. *(beating his breast.)*

A murd'rer is a guiltless wretch to me.

Hart. Be patient ; 'tis a momentary pitch ;
Let me encounter it.

*(Goes up to Orra, and fixes his eyes upon
her, which she, after a moment, shrinks
from and seeks to avoid, yet still, as if in-
voluntarily, looks at him again.)*

Or. Take off from me thy strangely-fasten'd
eye :

I may not look upon thee, yet I must.

*(Still turning from him, and still snatching a
hasty look at him as before.)*

Unfix thy baleful glance : Art thou a snake ?

Something of horrid power within thee dwells.
 Still, still that powerful eye doth suck me in
 Like a dark eddy to its wheeling core.
 Spare me ! O spare me, Being of strange power,
 And at thy feet my subject head I'll lay.

*(Kneeling to Hartman, and bending her head
 submissively.)*

El. Alas, the piteous sight ! to see her thus ;
 The noble, generous, playful, stately Orra !

Theo. *(running to Hartman, and pushing him
 away with indignation.)*

Out on thy hateful and ungenerous guile !
 Think'st thou I'll suffer o'er her wretched state
 The slightest shadow of a base controul ?

(Raising Orra from the ground.)

No, rise thou stately flower with rude blasts
 rent ;

As honour'd art thou with thy broken stem
 And leafets strew'd, as in thy summer's pride.
 I've seen thee worshipp'd like a regal dame
 With ev'ry studied form of mark'd devotion,
 Whilst I, in distant silence, scarcely proffer'd
 Ev'n a plain soldier's courtesy ; but now,
 No liege-man to his crowned mistress sworn,
 Bound and devoted is as I to thee ;
 And he who offers to thy alter'd state
 The slightest seeming of diminish'd rev'rence,
 Must in my blood —— *(To Hartman.)* O pardon
 me, my friend !

Thou'st wrung my heart.

Hart. Nay, do thou pardon me : I am to
 blame :

Thy nobler heart shall not again be wrung.
But what can now be done? O'er such wild
 ravings,
There must be some controul.

Theo. O none ! none, none ! but gentle sym-
 pathy
And watchfulness of love.

 My noble Orra !
Wander where'er thou wilt ; thy vagrant steps
Shall follow'd be by one, who shall not weary,
Nor e'er detach him from his hopeless task ;
Bound to thee now as fairest, gentlest beauty
Could ne'er have bound him.

Al. See how she gazes on him with a look,
Subsiding gradually to softer sadness,
Half saying that she knows him.

El. There is a kindness in her changing eye.
Yes, Orra, 'tis the valiant Theobald,
Thy knight and champion, whom thou gazest
 on,

Or. The brave are like the brave ; so should
 it be.

He was a goodly man — a noble knight.
(*To Theobald.*) What is thy name, young sol-
 dier ? — Woe is me !

For prayers of grace are said o'er dying men,
Yet they have laid thy clay in unblest earth —
Shame ! shame ! not with the still'd and holy
 dead.

This shall be rectified ; I'll find it out ;
And masses shall be said for thy repose ;
Thou shalt not troop with these.

El. 'Tis not the dead, 'tis Theobald himself,
Alive and well, who standeth by thy side.

Or. (*looking wildly round.*)

Where, where? All dreadful things are near
me, round me,

Beneath my feet and in the loaded air.

Let him begone! The place is horrible!

Baneful to flesh and blood. — The dreadful
blast!

Their hounds now yell below i'the centre gulph;

They may not rise again till solemn bells

Have given the stroke that severs night from
morn.

El. O rave not thus! Dost thou not know us,
Orra?

Or. (*hastily.*) Aye, well enough I know ye.

Urst. Ha! think ye that she does?

El. It is a terrible smile of recognition,
If such it be.

Hart. Nay, do not thus your restless eye-balls
move,

But look upon us steadily, sweet Orra.

Or. Away! your faces waver to and fro;
I'll know you better in your winding-sheets,

When the moon shines upon ye.

Theo. Give o'er, my friends; you see it is in
vain;

Her mind within itself holds a dark world

Of dismal phantasies and horrid forms!

Contend with her no more.

Enter an Attendant in an abrupt disturbed manner.

Att. (to Eleanor, aside.)

Lady, I bring to you most dismal news :
Too grievous for my Lord, so suddenly
And unprepar'd, to hear.

El. (aside) What is it ? Speak.

Att. (aside to El.) His son is dead, all swell'd
and rack'd with pain ;

And on the dagger's point, which the sly traitor
Still in his stiffen'd grasp retains, foul stains,
Like those of limed poison, shew full well
The wicked cause of his untimely death.

Hugh. (overhearing them.)

Who speaks of death ? What did'st thou whisper
there ?

How is my son ? — What look is that thou
wear'st ?

He is not dead ? — Thou dost not speak ! O
God !

I have no son.

(After a pause)

I am bereft ! — But this !

But only him ! — Heaven's vengeance deals the
stroke.

Urst. Heaven oft in mercy smites ev'n when
the blow

Severest is.

Hugh.

I had no other hope.

Fell is the stroke, if mercy in it be !

Could this — could this alone atone my crime ?

Urst. Submit thy soul to Heaven's all-wise
decree.

Perhaps his life had blasted more thy hopes
Than ev'n his grievous end.

Hugh. He was not all a father's heart could
wish ;

But, oh ! he was my son ! — my only son :
My child—the thing that from his cradle grew,
And was before me still. — Oh, oh ! Oh, oh !

(Beating his breast, and groaning deeply.)

Or. *(running up to him.)*

Ha ! dost thou groan, old man ? Art thou in
trouble ?

Out on it ! tho' they lay him in the mould,
He's near thee still. — I'll tell thee how it is :
A hideous burst hath been : the damn'd and
holy,

The living and the dead, together are
In horrid neighbourhood—'Tis but thin vapour,
Floating around thee, makes the wav'ring bound.
Poh ! blow it off, and see th' uncurtain'd reach.
See ! from all points they come ; earth casts them
up !

In grave-clothes swath'd are those but new in
death ;

And there be some half bone, half cased in shreds
Of that which flesh hath been ; and there be
some

With wicker'd ribs, thro' which the darkness
scowls.

Back, back ! — They close upon us. — Oh ! the
void

Of hollow unball'd sockets staring grimly,
And lipless jaws that move and clatter round
us

In mockery of speech ! — Back, back, I say !
Back, back !

*(Catching hold of Hughobert and Theobald,
and dragging them back with her in all the
wild strength of frantic horror, whilst the
curtain drops.)*

THE END OF ORRA.

THE DREAM:
A TRAGEDY, IN PROSE,
IN THREE ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

OSTERLOO, *an Imperial General.*

Prior of the Monastery.

BENEDICT, }
JEROME, } *Monks.*
PAUL, }

MORAND, }
WOVELREID, } *Officers in the Service of the Prior.*

The Imperial Ambassador.

Officers *serving under Osterloo.*

Sexton, Monks, Soldiers, Peasants, &c.

WOMEN.

LEONORA.

AGNES.

Scene, *the Monastery of St. Maurice in Switzerland ; a Castle near it.*

Time, *the middle of the 14th Century.*

THE DREAM.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *A Court within the Monastery, with a grated iron Gate opening into an outer Court, through which are seen several Peasants waiting ; JEROME is discovered on the front of the stage, walking backwards and forwards in a disturbed manner, then stopping and speaking to himself.*

Jer. TWICE in one night the same awful vision repeated! And Paul also terrified with a similar visitation! This is no common accidental mimicry of sleep: the shreds and remnants of our day-thoughts, put together at night in some fantastic incongruous form, as the drifting clouds of a broken-up storm piece themselves again into uncertain shapes of rocks and animals. No, no! there must be some great and momentous meaning in this.

Enter BENEDICT behind him.

Ben. Some great and momentous meaning in this! What art thou musing upon?

Jer. Be satisfied ! be satisfied ! It is not always fitting that the mind should lay open the things it is busy withal, though an articulate sound may sometimes escape it to set curiosity on the rack. Where is brother Paul ? Is he still at his devotions ?

Ben. I believe so. But look where the poor Peasants are waiting without : it is the hour when they expect our benefactions. Go, and speak to them : thou hast always been their favourite confessor, and they want consolation.

(Beckoning the Peasants, who thereupon advance through the gate, while Jerome stretches out his hand to prevent them.)

Jer. Stop there ! come not within the gates ! I charge you advance no farther. *(To Benedict angrily.)* There is death and contagion in every one of them, and yet thou would'st admit them so near us. Dost thou indeed expect a miracle to be wrought in our behalf ? Are we not flesh and blood ? and does not the grave yawn for us as well as other men ?

(To the Peasants still more vehemently.)

Turn, I charge you, and retire without the gate.

1st Peas. Oh ! be not so stern with us, good Father ! There are ten new corpses in the village since yesterday, and scarcely ten men left in it with strength enough to bury them. The best half of the village are now under ground, who, but three weeks gone by, were all alive and well. O, do not chide us away !

2d Peas. God knows if any of us shall ever enter these gates again; and it revives us to come once a day to receive your blessings, good Fathers.

Jer. Well, and you shall have our blessing, my children; but come not so near us; we are mortal men like yourselves, and there is contagion about you.

1st Peas. Ah! no, no! Saint Maurice will take care of his own; there is no fear of you, Fathers.

Jer. I hope he will; but it is presumptuous to tempt danger. Retire, I beseech you, and you shall have relief given to you without the gates. If you have any love for us, retire.

(The Peasants retire.)

Ben. Well, I feel a strong faith within me, that our Saint, or some other good spirit, will take care of us. How is it that thou art so alarmed and so vehement with those good people? It is not thy usual temper.

Jer. Be satisfied, I pray thee: I cannot tell thee now. Leave me to myself a little while. — Would to God brother Paul were come to me! Ha! here he is.

Enter PAUL; and JEROME, after waiting impatiently till BENEDICT retires, advances to him eagerly.

Was it to a spot near the black monument in the stranger's burying vault, that it pointed?

Paul. Yes, to the very spot described by thee yesterday morning, when thou first told'st me thy dream : and, indeed, every circumstance of my last night's vision strongly resembled thine ; or rather, I should say, was the same. The fixed frown of it's ghastly face ———

Jer. Aye, and the majestic motion of its limbs. Did it not wear a mantle over its right shoulder, as if for concealment rather than grace ?

Paul. I know not ; I did not mark that ; but it strode before me as distinctly as ever mortal man did before my waking sight ; and yet as no mortal man ever did before the waking sight.

Jer. But it appeared to thee only once.

Paul. Only once ; for I waked under such a deep horror, that I durst not go to sleep again.

Jer. When it first 'appeared to me, as I told thee, the night before last, the form, though distinctly, was but faintly imaged forth ; and methought it rose more powerfully to my imagination as I told it to thee, than in the dream itself. But last night, when it returned, it was far more vivid than before. I waked indeed as thou did'st, impressed with a deep horror, yet irresistible sleep seized upon me again ; and O, how it appeared to me the third time, like a palpable, horrid reality !
(After a pause)
What is to be done ?

Paul. What can be done? We can stop no division of the Imperial army till one shall really march by this pass.

Jer. And this is not likely; for I received a letter from a friend two days ago, by an express messenger, who says, he had delayed sending it, hoping to have it conveyed to me by one of Count Osterloo's soldiers, who, with his division, should have marched through our pass, but was now, he believed, to conduct them by a different route.

Paul. What noise and commotion is that near the gate?

(Calling to those without.)

Ho there! What is the matter?

1st. Peas. (without.) Nothing, Father; but we hear a trumpet at a distance, and they say, there is an army marching amongst the mountains.

Jer. By all our holy saints, if it be so—

(Calling again to the 1st Peas.)

Are ye sure it is trumpets you hear?

1st. Peas. As sure as we ever heard any sound; and here is a lad too, who saw from the top-most crag, with his own eyes, their banners waving at a distance.

Jer. (to Paul.) What think'st thou of it?

Paul. We must go to the Prior, and reveal the whole to him directly. Our own lives and those of the whole brotherhood depend upon it; there can be no hesitation now.

Jer. Come then; lose no time. We have a solemn duty imposed upon us. [EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

An open Space by the Gate of the Monastery, with a View of the Building on one Side, while Rocks and Mountains, wildly grand, appear in every other Direction, and a narrow Pass through the Mountains opening to the bottom of the Stage. Several Peasants, both Men and Women, are discovered, waiting as if to see some Sight ; a Trumpet and warlike Music heard at a little distance.

1st Peas. Hear how it echoes amongst the rocks : it is your true warlike sound, that makes a man's heart stir within him, and his feet beat the ground to its measure.

2d Peas. Ah ! what have our hearts to do with it now, miserable as we are !

1st Peas. What have we to do with it ! Speak for thyself. Were I to be laid in the grave this very night, it would rouse me to hear those sounds, which remind me of the battle of Laupen.

2d Peas. Well ; look not so proudly at me : though I have not yet fought for my country, I am of a good stock, nevertheless : my father lost his life at Morgarten.

(Calling up to Morand, who now appears scrambling down the sides of the rocks.)
Are they near us, Lieutenant ?

Mor. They'll be here in a trice. I know their ensigns already : they are those brave fellows under the command of Count Osterloo, who

did such good service to the Emperor in his last battle.

3d Peas. (Woman.) Aye; they be goodly men, no doubt, and bravely accoutred, I warrant ye.

4th Peas. (Old Woman.) Aye, there be many a brave man amongst them I trow, returning to his mother again. My Hubert never returned.

2d Peas. (to Mor.) Count Osterloo! Who is he?

Mor. Did'st thou never hear of him? He has been in as many battles as thou hast been in harvest fields.

2d Peas. And won them too?

Mor. Nay, some of them he has won, and some he has lost; but whether his own side were fighting or flying, he always kept his ground, or retreated like a man. The enemy never saw his back.

1st Peas. True, Lieutenant; I once knew an old soldier of Osterloo's who boasted much of his General; for his men are proud of him, and would go through flood and flame for his sake.

Mor. Yes, he is affable and indulgent to them, although passionate and unreasonable when provoked; and has been known to punish even his greatest favourites severely for a slight offence. I remember well, the officer I first served under, being a man of this kidney, and ——

1st Peas. Hist, hist! the gates are thrown

open, and yonder come the Monks in procession with the Prior at their head.

(Enter Prior and Monks from the Monastery, and range themselves on one side of the stage.)

Prior. *(to the Peasants)* Retire, my children, and don't come so near us. Don't stand near the soldiers as they pass neither, but go to your houses.

1st Woman. O bless St. Maurice and your holy reverence ! We see nothing now but coffins and burials, and hear nothing but the ticking of the death-watch, and the tolling of bells : do let us stand here and look at the brave sight. Lord knows if any of us may be above ground to see such another, an' it were to pass this way but a week hence.

Prior. Be it so then, daughter, but keep at a distance on the rocks, where you may see every thing without communicating infection.

(The Peasants retire, climbing amongst the rocks : then enter by the narrow pass at the bottom of the stage, Soldiers marching to martial music, with Officers and Osterloo.)

Prior. *(advancing, and lifting up his hands with solemnity.)*

Soldiers and officers, and the noble chief commanding this band ! in the name of our patron St. Maurice, once like yourselves a

valiant soldier upon earth, now a holy powerful saint in heaven, I conjure you to halt.

1st Off. (in the foremost rank.)

Say you so, reverend Prior, to men pressing forward as we do, to shelter our heads for the night, and that cold wintry sun going down so fast upon us ?

1st Sold. By my faith ! if we pass the night here amongst the mountains, it will take something besides prayers and benedictions to keep us alive.

2d Sold. Spend the night here amongst cha-mois and eagles ! Some miracle no doubt will be wrought for our accommodation.

1st Off. Murmur not, my friends : here comes your general, who is always careful of you.

Ost. (advancing from the rear.)

What is the matter ?

Prior. (to Ost.) You are the commander in chief ?

Ost. Yes, reverend Father : and, with all respect and deference, let me say, the night advances fast upon us. Martigny is still at a good distance, and we must not be detained. With many thanks, then, for your intended civilities, we beg your prayers, holy Prior, with those of your pious Monks, and crave leave to pass on our way.

Prior. (lifting his hands as before.)

If there be any piety in brave men, I conjure you, in the name of St. Maurice, to halt ! The lives of our whole community depend upon it ;

men who, for your lives, have offered to heaven many prayers.

Ost. How may this be, my Lord ? Who will attack your sacred walls, that you should want any defence ?

Prior. We want not, general, the service of your arms : my own troops, with the brave captain who commands them, are sufficient to defend us from mortal foes.

Soldiers. (*murmuring*) Must we fight with devils then ?

Ost. Be quiet, my good comrades. (*To Prior.*) Well, my Lord, proceed.

Prior. A fatal pestilence rages in this neighbourhood ; and by command of a vision, which has appeared three times to the Senior of our order, and also to another of our brotherhood, threatening, in case of disobedience, that the whole community shall fall victims to the dreadful disease, we are compelled to conjure you to halt.

Ost. And for what purpose ?

Prior. That we may chuse by lot from the first division of the Imperial army which marches through this pass, (so did the vision precisely direct us,) a man who shall spend one night within the walls of our monastery ; there to undergo certain penances for the expiation of long-concealed guilt.

Ost. This is very strange. By lot did you say ? It will be tedious. There are a hundred of my

men who will volunteer the service.—What say ye, Soldiers?

1st Sold. Willingly, General, if you desire it. Yet I marvel what greater virtue there can be in beleag'ring the war-worn hide of a poor soldier, than the fat sides of a well-fed monk.

Ost. Wilt thou do it, then?

1st Sold. Aye; and more than that, willingly, for my General. It is not the first time a cat-o'-nine-tails has been across my back for other men's misdeeds. Promise me a good flask of brandy when I'm done with it, and I warrant ye I'll never winch. As to the saying of Pater-nosters, if there be any thing of that kind tacked to it, I let you to wit my dexterity is but small.

Ost. Then be it as thou wilt, my good friend; yet I had as lief my own skin should smart for it as thine, thou art such a valiant fellow.

Prior. No, noble General, this must not be; we must have our man chosen by lot. The lives of the whole community depending upon it; we must strictly obey the vision.

Ost. It will detain us long.

Prior. Nay, my Lord; the lots are already prepared. In the first place, six men only shall draw; four representing the soldiers, and two the officers. If the soldiers are taken, they shall draw by companies, and the company that is taken shall draw individually; but if the lot falls to the officers, each of them shall draw for himself.

Ost. Let it be so ; you have arranged it well.
Produce the lots.

(The Prior giving the sign, a Monk advances, bearing a stand, on which are placed three vases, and sets it near the front of the stage.)

Prior. Now, brave Soldiers, let four from your body advance.

(Ost. points to four men, who advance from the ranks.)

Ost. And two from the officers, my Lord ?

Prior. Even so, noble Count.

(Ost. then points to two Officers, who, with the four Soldiers, draw lots from the smallest vase directed by the Prior.)

1st Sold. (speaking to his comrades as the others are drawing.) This is strange mummerly i' faith ! but it would have been no joke, I suppose, to have offended St. Maurice.

Prior. (after examining the lots.) Soldiers, ye are free ; it is your Officers who are taken.

1st Sold. (as before) Ha ! the vision is dainty it seems ; it is not vulgar blood like ours, that will serve to stain the ends of his holy lash.

(A Monk having removed two of the vases, the Prior beckons the Officers to draw from the remaining one.)

Prior. Stand not on order ; let him who is nearest put in his hand first.

1st Sold. (aside to the others as the Officers are drawing)

Now by these arms ! I would give a month's

pay that the lot should fall on our prim, pompous lieutenant. It would be well worth the money to look in at one of their narrow windows, and see his dignified back-bone winching under the hands of a good brawny friar.

Ost. (aside, unrolling his lot.)

Mighty heaven! Is fate or chance in this?

1st Off. (aside to Ost.) Have you got it, General? Change it for mine if you have.

Ost. No, no, my noble Albert; let us be honest; but thanks to thy generous friendship!

Prior. Now shew the lots. (*All the Officers shew their lots, excepting Osterloo, who continues gloomy and thoughtful.*) Has no one drawn the sable scroll of election? (*To Osterloo.*) You are silent, my Lord; of what colour is your lot?

Ost. (holding out his scroll.)

Black as midnight.

(*Soldiers quit their ranks and crowd round Osterloo, tumultuously.*)

1st Sold. Has it fallen upon our General? 'tis a damned lot — an unfair lot.

2d Sold. We will not leave him behind us, though a hundred St. Maurices commanded it.

3d Sold. Get within your walls again, ye cunning Friars.

1st Sold. An' we should lie i' the open air all night, we will not leave brave Osterloo behind us.

Prior. (to Ost.) Count, you seem gloomy and irresolute: have the goodness to silence these

clamours. I am in truth as sorry as any of your soldiers can be, that the lot has fallen upon you.

1st Off. (aside to Ost.) Nay, my noble friend, let me fulfil this penance in your stead. It is not now a time for scruples : the soldiers will be mutinous.

Ost. Mutinous ! Soldiers, return to your ranks. (*Looking at them sternly as they seem unwillingly to obey.*) Will you brave me so far that I must repeat my command ? (*They retire.*)

I thank thee, dear Albert. (*To 1st Off.*) Thou shalt do something in my stead ; but it shall not be the service thou thinkest of. (*To Prior.*) Reverend Father, I am indeed somewhat struck at being marked out by fate from so many men ; but, as to how I shall act thereupon, no wise irresolute. (*To the Sold.*) Continue your march. The brave Albert shall conduct you to Martigny ; and there you will remain under his command, till I join you again.

1st Sold. God preserve you then, my noble General ! and if you do not join us again by to-morrow evening, safe and sound, we will not leave one stone of that building standing on another.

Many Soldiers at once. So swear we all ! So swear, &c.

Ost. (assuming a cheerful look.)
Go to, foolish fellows ? Were you to leave me in a den of lions, you could not be more apprehensive. Will watching all night by some holy shrine, or walking bare-foot through their mid-

night aisles, be such a hardship to one, who has passed so many nights with you all on the cold field of battle? Continue your march without delay; else these good Fathers will count you no better than a band of new-raised city troops, with some jolly tankard-chief for your leader. A good march to you, my friends, with kind hostesses and warm fire-sides where you are going.

1st Sold. Ah! What good will our fire-sides do us, when we think how our General is lodged?

Ost. Farewell! March on as quickly as you may: you shall all drink my health to-morrow evening in a good hogshead of Rhenish.

1st Sold. (with others.) God grant we may! (*1st to Prior.*) Look to it, reverend Prior: if our General be not with us by to-morrow's sunset, St. Maurice shall neither have monastery nor monks on this mountain.

Ost. No more! (*Embracing first Officer, and shaking hands with others.*) Farewell! Farewell!

(*The Soldiers, after giving him a loud cheer, march off with their Officers to martial music, and EXEUNT Osterloo, Prior, and Monks into the monastery, while the Peasants disappear amongst the rocks. MANENT Morand and Agnes, who has for some time appeared, looking over a crag.*)

Agn. Morand, Morand!

Mor. Ha! art thou there? I might have guessed indeed, that so brave a sight would not

escape thee. What made thee perch thyself like an eagle upon such a crag as that?

Agn. Chide not, good Morand, but help me down, lest I pay a dearer price for my sight than thou, with all thy grumbling, wouldst wish.

(He helps her down.)

Mor. And now thou art going no doubt to tell the Lady Leonora, what a band of gallant fellows thou hast seen.

Agn. Assuredly, if I can find in my heart to speak of any but their noble leader! — What is his name? What meaning had all that drawing of lots in it? What will the monks do with him? Walk with me a little way towards the castle, brave Morand, and tell me what thou knowest.

Mor. I should walk to the castle and miles beyond it too, ere I could answer so many questions, and I have duty in the monastery, besides.

Agn. Come with me a little way, at least.

Mor. Ah, Witch! thou knowest too well that I must always do what thou biddest me.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE III.

The Refectory of the Monastery, with a small Table, on which are placed Refreshments, discovered in one Corner. Enter OSTERLOO, Prior, BENEDICT, JEROME, and PAUL, &c.

Prior. Noble Osterloo, let me welcome you here, as one appointed by heaven to purchase our deliverance from this dreadful malady; and I hope the price to be paid for it will not be a heavy one. Yet ere we proceed further in this matter, be entreated, I pray, to take some refreshment after your long march.

(The table is placed near the front of the stage.)

Ost. I thank you, my Lord; this is a gentle beginning to my penance: I will, then, by your leave.

(Sitting down at the table.)

I have fasted long, and am indeed somewhat exhausted.

(After taking some refreshment.)

Ah! My poor Soldiers! You must still endure two hours' weary march, before you find such indulgence. Your wine is good, reverend Father.

Prior. I am glad you find it so; it is old.

Ost. (cheerfully.) And your viands are good too; and your bread is delicious.

(Drinking another cup.)

I shall have vigour now for any thing. ———
Pray tell me something more of this wonderful

vision : was it a Saint or an Angel that appeared to the Senior Brother ?

Prior. (*pointing to Jerome.*)

He will answer for himself, and (*pointing to Paul*) this man saw it also.

Jer. It was neither Angel nor Saint, noble Count, but a mortal form wonderfully noble.

Ost. And it appeared to you in the usual manner of a dream ?

Jer. It did ; at least I know no sensible distinction. A wavy envelopement of darkness preceded it, from which appearances seemed dimly to wake into form, till all was presented before me in the full strength of reality.

Paul. Nay, Brother, it broke upon me at once ; a vivid distinct apparition.

Ost. Well, be that as it may ; what did appear to you ? A mortal man, and very noble ?

Jer. Yes, General. Methought I was returning from mass, through the cloisters that lead from the chapel, when a figure, as I have said, appeared to me, and beckoned me to follow it. I did follow it ; for at first I was neither afraid, nor even surprised ; but so wonderfully it rose in stature and dignity as it strode before me, that, ere it reached the door of the stranger's burying vault, I was struck with unaccountable awe.

Ost. The stranger's burying vault !

Prior. Does any sudden thought strike you, Count ?

Ost. No, no! here's your health, Fathers ;
(*drinking ;*) your wine is excellent.

Prior. But that is water you have just now
swallowed : this is the wine.

Ost. Ha ! is it ? No matter, no matter ! it is
very good too. (*A long pause ; Osterloo with
his eyes fixed thoughtfully on the ground.*)

Prior. Shall not our brother proceed with
his story, General ?

Ost. Most certainly : I have been listening
for it.

Jer. Well, then, as I have said, at the door of
the stranger's burying vault it stopped, and
beckoned me again. It entered, and I followed
it. There, through the damp mouldering tombs,
it strode still before me, till it came to the
farther extremity, as nearly as I could guess,
two yards westward from the black marble mo-
nument ; and then, stopping and turning on
me its fixed and ghastly eyes, it stretched out
its hands ———

Ost. Its hands ! Did you say, its hands ?

Jer. It stretched out one of them ; the other
was covered with its mantle ; and in a voice that
sounded — I know not how it sounded ———

Paul. Aye, Brother ; it was something like a
voice, at least it conveyed words to the mind,
though it was not like a voice neither.

Jer. Be that as you please : these words it
solemnly uttered, — “ Command the Brothers of
this monastery, on pain of falling victims to the
pestilence now devastating the country, to stop

on its way the first division of the Imperial army that shall march through your mountain pass ; and chuse from it, by lot, a man who shall abide one night within these walls, to make expiation for long concealed guilt. Let the suffering be such as the nature of the crime and the connection of the expiator therewith shall dictate. This spot of earth shall reveal —” It said no more, but bent its eyes steadfastly upon me with a stern threatening frown, which became, as it looked, keener than the looks of any mortal being, and vanished from my sight.

Paul. Aye, that look ; that last terrible look ! it awoke me with terror, and I know not how it vanished.

Jer. This has been repeated to me three times ; last night twice in the course of the night, while brother Paul here was at the same time terrified with a similar apparition.

Prior. This, you will acknowledge, Count, was no common visitation, and could not but trouble us.

Ost. You say well. ——— Yet it was but a dream.

Prior. True ; it was but a dream, and as such these pious men strove to consider it ; when the march of your troops across our mountains, a thing so unlikely to happen, compelled them to reveal to me, without loss of time, what had appeared to them.

Ost. A tall figure, you say, and of a noble aspect ?

Jer. Like that of a King, though habited more in the garb of a foreign soldier of fortune than of a state so dignified.

(Osterloo rises from table agitated.)

Prior. What is the matter, General? Will you not finish your repast?

Ost. I thank you; I have had enough. The night grows cold; I would rather walk than sit.

(Going hastily to the bottom of the stage, and pacing to and fro.)

Jer. (aside to Paul and the Prior.) What think ye of this?

Prior. (aside to Jerome.) His countenance changed several times as he listened to you; there is something here different from common surprise on hearing a wonderful thing.

(Enter a Peasant by the bottom of the stage, bearing a torch.)

Peas. (eagerly, as he enters.) We have found it.

Ost. (stopping short in his walk.) What hast thou found?

Peas. What the Prior desired us to dig for.

Ost. What is that?

Peas. A grave.

(Osterloo turns from him suddenly, and paces up and down very rapidly.)

Prior. (to Peas.) Thou hast found it?

Peas. Aye, please you, and in the very spot, near the black monument, where your reverence desired us to dig. And it is well you sent

for my kinsman and I to do it, for there is not a lay-brother in the monastery strong enough to raise up the great stones that covered it.

Prior. In the very spot, sayest thou?

Peas. In the very spot.

Prior. Bear thy torch before us, and we'll follow thee.

Omnes. (*eagerly, Osterloo excepted.*)

Let us go immediately.

Prior. (*to Osterloo, who stands fixed to the spot.*)

Will not Count Osterloo go also? It is fitting that he should.

Ost. (*rousing himself.*) O, most assuredly : I am perfectly ready to follow you.

[EXEUNT.]

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *A burying Vault, almost totally dark ; the Monuments and Grave-stones being seen very dimly by the Light of a single Torch, stuck by the side of a deep open Grave, in which a Sexton is discovered, standing leaning on his Mattock, and MORAND, above Ground, turning up, with his sheathed Sword, the loose Earth about the Mouth of the Grave.*

Mor. There is neither scull nor bone amongst this earth : the ground must have been newly broken up, when that coffin was let down into it.

Sex. So one should think ; but the earth here has the quality of consuming whatever is put into it in a marvellous short time.

Mor. Aye ; the flesh and more consumable parts of a body ; but hath it grinders in its jaws like your carnivorous animal, to cransh up bones and all ? I have seen bones on an old field of battle, some hundred years after the action, lying whitened and hard in the sun.

Sex. Well, an't be new ground, I'll warrant ye somebody has paid money enough for such a good tenement as this : I could not wish my own father a better.

Mor. (*looking down.*) The coffin is of an uncommon size : there must be a leaden one within it, I should think.

Sex. I doubt that : it is only a clumsy shell that has been put together in haste ; and I'll be hanged if he who made it ever made another before it. Now it would pine me with vexation to think I should be laid in such a bungled piece of workmanship as this.

Mor. Aye ; it is well for those who shall bury thee, Sexton, that thou wilt not be a looker-on at thine own funeral. — Put together in haste, sayest thou ! How long may it be since this coffin was laid in the ground ?

Sex. By my fay, now, I cannot tell ; though many a grave I have dug in this vault, instead of the lay-brothers, who are mighty apt to take a cholic or shortness of breath, or the like, when any thing of hard labour falls to their share. (*After pausing.*) Ha ! now I have it. When I went over the mountain some ten years ago to visit my father-in-law, Baldwick, the stranger, who died the other day, after living so long as a hermit amongst the rocks, came here ; and it was shrewdly suspected he had leave from our late Prior, for a good sum of money, to bury a body privately in this vault. I was a fool not to think of it before. This, I'll be sworn for it, is the place.

Enter the Prior, OSTERLOO, JEROME, PAUL, BENEDICT, and other Monks, with the Peasant carrying light before them. They enter by an arched door at the bottom of the stage, and walk on to the front, when every one, but Osterloo, crowds eagerly to the grave, looking down into it.

Prior. (to Sexton.) What hast thou found, friend?

Sex. A coffin an't please you, and of a size, too, that might almost contain a giant.

Omnes. (Osterloo *excepted.*) The inscription — is there an inscription on it?

Sex. No, no! They who put these planks together had no time for inscriptions.

Omnes. (as before.) Break it open: — break it open.

(*They crowd more eagerly about the grave, when, after a pause, the Sexton is heard wrenching open the lid of the coffin.*)

Omnes. (as before.) What is there in it? What hast thou found, Sexton?

Sex. An entire skeleton, and of no common size.

Ost. (in a quick hollow voice.) Is it entire?

Sex. (after a pause.) No, the right hand is wanting, and there is not a loose bone in the coffin. (Ost. *shudders and steps back.*)

Jer. (to Prior, after a pause.) Will you not speak to him, Father? His countenance is changed, and his whole frame seems moved by some sudden convulsion.

(The Prior remains silent.)

How is this? You are also changed, reverend Father. Shall I speak to him?

Prior. Speak thou to him.

Jer. *(to Osterloo.)* What is the matter with you, General? Has some sudden malady seized you?

Ost. *(to Jerome.)* Let me be alone with you, holy Prior; let me be alone with you instantly.

Jer. *(pointing.)* This is the Prior.—He would be alone with you, Father: he would make his confession to you.

Prior. I dare not hear him alone: there must be witnesses. Let him come with me to my apartment.

Jer. *(to Osterloo, as they leave the grave.)*
Let me conduct you, Count.

(After walking from it some paces.)

Come on, my Lord, why do you stop short?

Ost. Not this way — not this way, I pray you.

Jer. What is it you would avoid?

Ost. Turn aside, I pray you; I cannot cross over this.

Jer. Is it the grave you mean? We have left it behind us.

Ost. Is it not there? It yawns across our path, directly before us.

Jer. Indeed, my Lord, it is some paces behind.

Ost. There is delusion in my sight then; lead me as thou wilt.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

*The private Apartment of the Prior ; enter
BENEDICT, looking round as he enters.*

Ben. Not yet come ; aye, penitence is not very swift of foot.

(Speaking to himself as he walks up and down.)
Miserable man ! — brave, goodly creature ! — but alas, alas ! most subdued ; most miserable ; and, I fear, most guilty !

Enter JEROME.

Jerome here ! — Dost thou know, Brother, that the Prior is coming here immediately to confess the penitent ?

Jer. Yes, Brother ; but I am no intruder ; for he has summoned me to attend the confession as well as thyself.

Ben. Methinks some other person of our order, unconcerned with the dreaming part of this business, would have been a less suspicious witness.

Jer. Suspicious ! Am I more concerned in this than any other member of our community ? Heaven appoints its own agents as it listeth : the stones of these walls might have declared its awful will as well as the dreams of a poor friar.

Ben. True, brother Jerome ; could they listen to confessions as he does, and hold reveries upon them afterwards.

Jer. What dost thou mean with thy reveries and confessions ? Did not Paul see the terrible vision as well as I ?

Ben. If thou hadst not revealed thy dream to him, he would have slept sound enough, or, at worst, have but flown over the pinnacles with his old mate the horned serpent, as usual : and had the hermit Baldwick never made his death-bed confession to thee, thou wouldst never have had such a dream to reveal.

Jer. Thinkest thou so ? Then what brought Osterloo and his troops so unexpectedly by this route ? With all thy heretical dislike to miraculous interposition, how wilt thou account for this ?

Ben. If thou hadst no secret intelligence of Osterloo's route, to set thy fancy a working on the story the hermit confessed to thee, I never wore cowl on my head.

Jer. Those, indeed, who hear thee speak so lightly of mysterious and holy things, will scarcely believe thou ever didst. — But hush ! the Prior comes with his penitent ; let us have no altercation now.

Enter Prior and OSTERLOO.

Prior. (after a pause, in which he seems agitated.)

Now, Count Osterloo, we are ready to hear your confession. To myself and these pious Monks ; men appointed by our holy religion to search into the crimes of the penitent, unburthen

your heart of its terrible secret ; and God grant you afterwards, if it be his righteous will, repentance and mercy.

Ost. (making a sign, as if unable to speak, then uttering rapidly.) Presently, presently.

Jer. Don't hurry him, reverend Father ; he cannot speak.

Ben. Take breath awhile, noble Osterloo, and speak to us when you can.

Ost. I thank you.

Ben. He is much agitated. (*to Osterloo.*) Lean upon me, my Lord.

Prior. (to Benedict.) Nay, you exceed in this. (*to Osterloo.*) Recollect yourself, General, and try to be more composed, You seem better now ; endeavour to unburden your mind of its fatal secret ; to have it labouring within your breast is protracting a state of misery.

Ost. (feebly.) I have voice now.

Jer. (to Osterloo.) Give to Heaven, then, as you ought —

Ben. Hush, brother Jerome ! no exhortations now ! let him speak it as he can. (*to Osterloo.*) We attend you most anxiously.

Ost. (after struggling for utterance.)
I slew him.

Prior. The man whose bones have now been discovered ?

Ost. The same : I slew him.

Jer. In the field, Count ?

Ost. No, no ! many a man's blood has been on my hands there : — this is on my heart.

Prior. It is then premeditated murder you have committed.

Ost. (hastily.) Call it so, call it so.

Jer. (to Osterloo, after a pause.) And is this all? Will you not proceed to tell us the circumstances attending it?

Ost. Oh! they were terrible! — But they are all in my mind as the indistinct horrors of a frenzied imagination.

(After a short pause.)

I did it in a narrow pass on St. Gothard, in the stormy twilight of a winter day.

Prior. You murdered him there?

Ost. I felt him dead under my grasp; but I looked at him no more after the last desperate thrust that I gave him. I hurried to a distance from the spot; when a servant, who was with me, seized with a sudden remorse, begged leave to return and remove the body, that, if possible, he might bury it in consecrated ground, as an atonement for the part he had taken in the terrible deed. — I gave him leave, with means to procure his desire: — I waited for him three days, concealed in the mountains; — but I neither saw him, nor heard of him again.

Ben. But what tempted a brave man like Osterloo to commit such a horrible act?

Ost. The torments of jealousy stung me to it. *(Hiding his face with his hands, and then uncovering it.)* I loved her, and was beloved: — He came, — a noble stranger —

Jer. Aye, if he was in his mortal state, as I

in my dream beheld him, he was indeed most noble.

Ost. (waving his hand impatiently.)

Well, well! he did come, then, and she loved me no more. — With arts and enchantments he besotted her. ————— Even from her own lips I received —

(Tossing up his arms violently, and then covering his face as before.)

But what is all this to you? Maimed as he was, having lost his right arm in a battle with the Turks, I could not defy him to the field. ————— After passing two nights in all the tossing agony of a damned spirit, I followed him on his journey 'cross the mountains. — On the twilight of the second day, I laid wait for him in a narrow pass; and as soon as his gigantic form darkened the path before me ————— I have told you all.

Prior. (eagerly.) You have not told his name.

Ost. Did I not say Montera? He was a noble Hungarian.

Prior. (much agitated.) He was so! — He was so. He was noble and beloved.

Jer. (aside to Prior.) What is the matter with you, reverend Father? Was he your Friend?

Prior. (aside to Jerome.) Speak not to me now, but question the murderer as ye will.

Ben. (overhearing the Prior.)

He is indeed a murderer, reverend Father, but he is our penitent.

Prior. Go to ! what are names ? — Ask him what questions you will, and finish the confession quickly.

Ben. (to Osterloo.) But have you never till now confessed this crime ; nor in the course of so many years reflected on its dreadful turpitude ?

Ost. The active and adventurous life of a soldier is most adverse to reflection : but often, in the stillness of midnight, the remembrance of this terrible deed has come powerfully upon me ; till morning returned, and the noise of the camp began, and the fortunes of the day were before me.

Prior. (in a severe voice.)

Thou hast indeed been too long permitted to remain in this hardened state. But Heaven, sooner or later, will visit the man of blood with its terrors. Sooner or later, he shall feel that he stands upon an awful brink ; and short is the step which engulphs him in that world, where the murdered and the murderer meet again, in the tremendous presence of HIM who is the Lord and Giver of life.

Ost. You believe then in such severe retribution ?

Prior. I believe in it as in my own existence.

Ost. (turning to Jerome and Benedict.)

And you, good Fathers, you believe in this ?

Ben. Nature teaches this, as well as revelation : we must believe it.

Jer. Some presumptuous minds, dazzled with

the sunshine of prosperity, have dared to doubt; but to us in the sober shade of life, visited too as we have now been by visions preternatural and awful, it is a thing of certainty rather than of faith.

Ost. That such things are, it makes the brain confused and giddy. — These are tremendous thoughts!

(Leans his back against the wall, and gazes fixedly on the ground.)

Prior. Let us leave him to the bitterness of his thoughts. We now must deliberate with the brethren on what is to be done. There must be no delay; the night advances fast. Conduct him to another apartment. I must assemble a council of the whole order.

Jer. (to Osterloo.) We must lead you to another apartment, Count, while we consider what is to be done.

Ost. (roused.) Aye, the expiation, you mean: let it be severe, if atonement in this world may be made.

(Turning to Prior as Jerome leads him off.)
Let your expiation be severe, holy Father; a slight penance matches not with such a crime as mine.

Prior. Be well assured it shall be what it ought.

Ost. (turning again, and catching hold of the Prior's robe.) I regard not bodily pain. In battle once, with the head of a broken arrow in my thigh, I led on the charge, and sustained all

the exertions of a well-fought field, till night closed upon our victory. Let your penance be severe, my reverend Father ; I have been long acquainted with pain.

[EXEUNT Osterloo and Jerome.

Ben. You seem greatly moved, Father ; but it is not with pity for the wretched. You would not destroy such a man as this, though his crime is the crime of blood ?

Prior. He shall die : ere another sun dawn on these walls, he shall die.

Ben. Oh, say not so ! Think of some other expiation.

Prior. I would think of another, were there any other more dreadful to him than death.

Ben. He is your penitent.

Prior. He is the murderer of my brother.

Ben. Then Heaven have mercy on him, if he must find none here ! —————
Montero was your brother ?

Prior. My only brother. It were tedious to tell thee now, how I was separated from him after the happy days of our youth. —————
I saw him no more ; yet he was still the dearest object of my thoughts. After escaping death in many a battle, he was slain, as it was conjectured, by banditti, in travelling across the mountains. His body was never discovered. Ah ! little did I think it was lying so near me !

Ben. It is indeed piteous, and you must needs feel it as a brother : but consider the danger we run, should we lay violent hands on

an Imperial General, with his enraged soldiers, within a few hours' march of our walls.

Prior. I can think of nothing but revenge. Speak to me no more. I must assemble the whole order immediately.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE III.

Another Apartment. Enter OSTERLOO, as from a small Recess at the bottom of the Stage, pacing backwards and forwards several times in an agitated manner; then advancing slowly to the front, where he stands musing and muttering to himself for some moments, before he speaks aloud.

Ost. That this smothered horror should burst upon me at last! And there be really such things as the darkened fancy imageth to itself, when the busy day is stilled. An unseen world surrounds us: spirits and powers, and the invisible dead, hover near us; while we in unconscious security — Oh! I have slept upon a fearful brink! Every sword that threatened my head in battle, had power in its edge to send me to a terrible account. — I have slept upon a fearful brink. ————— Am I truly awake? (*Rubbing his eyes, then grasping several parts of his body, first with one hand and then with the other.*) Yes, yes! it is so! — I am keenly and terribly awake.

(Paces rapidly up and down, and then stopping short.)

Can there be virtue in penances suffered by the body to do away offences of the soul? If there be — O if there be! let them runnel my body with stripes, and swaith me round in one continued girth of wounds! Any thing that can be endured here is mercy compared to the dreadful abiding of what may be hereafter.

Enter WOVELREID behind, followed by Soldiers, who range themselves at the bottom of the stage. Osterloo, turning round, runs up to him eagerly.

Ha! my dear Albert, returned to me again, with all my noble fellows at thy back.————

———— Pardon me, I mistook you for one of my Captains.

Wov. I am the Prior's Captain.

Ost. And those men too?

Wov. They are the Prior's soldiers, who have been ordered from distant quarters to repair to the monastery immediately.

Ost. In such haste!

Wov. Aye, in truth: we received our orders after sun-set, and have marched two good leagues since.

Ost. What may this mean?

Wov. Faith, I know not. My duty is to obey the Prior, and pray to our good saint; and whether I am commanded to surprise the strong-

hold of an enemy, or protect an execution, it is the same thing to me.

Ost. An execution! can aught of this nature be intended?

Wov. You turn pale, Sir: wearing the garb of a soldier, you have surely seen blood ere now.

Ost. I have seen too much blood.

Enter Prior, JEROME, PAUL, and Monks, walking in order; the Prior holding a paper in his hand.

Prior (with solemnity.) Count Osterloo, Lieutenant-General of our liege Lord the Emperor, authorized by this deed, which is subscribed by all the brethren of our Holy Order here present, I pronounce to you our solemn decision, that the crime of murder, as, by the mysterious voice of Heaven, and your own confession, your crime is proved to be, can only be expiated by death: you are therefore warned to prepare yourself to die this night. Before day-break you must be with the inhabitants of another world, where may the great Maker of us all deal with you in mercy!

(Osterloo staggers back from the spot where he stood, and remains silent.)

Prior. It is a sentence, Count, pronounced against you from necessity, to save the lives of our whole community, which you yourself have promised to submit to; have you any thing to say in reply to it?

Ost. Nothing : my thoughts are gone from me in the darkness of astonishment.

Prior. We are compelled to be thus hasty and severe : ere day-break you must die.

Ost. Ere day-break ! not even the light of another sun to one so ill prepared for the awful and tremendous state into which you would thrust him ! this is inhuman ! it is horrible !

Prior. He was as ill prepared for it, who, with still shorter warning, was thrust into that awful state in the narrow pass of St. Gothard.

Ost. The guilt of murder was not on his soul.
————— Nay, nay, holy Prior, consider this horrible extremity : let the pain of the executioner's stroke be twenty-fold upon me ; but thrust me not forth to that state from which my soul recoils with unutterable horror ! —————

————— Never but once, to save the life of a friend, did I bend the knee to mortal man in humble supplication. I am a soldier ; in many battles I have bled for the service of my country : I am a noble soldier, and I was a proud one ; yet do I thus — condemn not my extremity — my knee is on the ground.

Prior. Urge me no further. It must not be ; no respite can be granted.

Ost. (*starting up furiously from the ground, and drawing his sword.*)

Then subdue as you may, stern priest, the strength of a desperate man.

(*Wovelreid and Soldiers rush forward, getting behind him, and surrounding him on*

every side, and after a violent struggle disarm him.)

Wov. What a noble fellow this would be to defend a narrow breach, though he shrinks with such abhorrence from a scaffold. It is a piteous thing to see him so beset.

Prior. (to Wovelreid.) What sayest thou, fool?

Wov. Nay, it is no business of mine, my Lord, I confess. Shall we conduct him to the prison chamber?

Prior. Do so; and see that he retain no concealed arms about him.

Wov. I obey, my Lord: every thing shall be made secure.

(EXIT Osterloo, guarded by Wovelreid and Soldiers; and at the same time enter Benedict, by the opposite side, who stands looking after him piteously.)

Prior. (sternly to Benedict.) What brings thee here? Dost thou repent having refused to concur with us in an act that preserves the community?

Ben. Say rather, reverend Father, an act that revenges your brother's death, which the laws of the empire should revenge.

Prior. A supernatural visitation of heaven hath commanded us to punish it. ————
What! dost thou shake thy head? Thou art of a doubting and dangerous spirit; and beware lest, sooner or later, the tempter do not lure thee into heresy. If reason cannot subdue

thee, authority shall. ————— Return again to thy cell ; let me hear of this no more.

Ben. I will, reverend Father. But, for the love of our holy saint, bethink you, ere it be too late, that though we may be saved from the pestilence by this bloody sacrifice, what will rescue our throats from the swords of Osterloo's soldiers when they shall return, as they have threatened, to demand from us their General ?

Prior. Give thyself no concern about this. My own bands are already called in, and a messenger has been dispatched to the Abbess Matilda ; her troops, in defence of the church, will face the best soldiers of the empire. — But why lose we time in unprofitable contentions ? Go, my sons, (*speaking to other Monks.*) the night advances fast, and we have much to do ere morning.

(*Knocking heard without.*)

Ha ! who knocks at this untimely hour ? Can the soldiers be indeed returned upon us ? — Run to the gate, but open it to none.

(*EXEUNT several Monks in haste, and presently re-enter with a Lay-Brother.*)

Lay-B. Please ye, reverend Father ; the Marchioness has sent a messenger from the castle, beseeching you to send a confessor immediately to confess one of her women, who was taken ill yesterday, and is now at the point of death.

Prior. I'm glad it is only this. — What is the matter with the penitent ?

Lay-B. I know not, please you : the messenger only said, she was taken ill yesterday.

Prior. (*shaking his head.*) Aye, this malady has got there also.—I cannot send one of the brothers to bring infection immediately amongst us. ————— What is to be done? Leonora is a most noble Lady; and the family have been great benefactors to our order. — I must send somebody to her. But he must stop well his nostrils with spicery, and leave his upper garment behind him, when he quits the infected apartment. Jerome, wilt thou go? Thou art the favorite confessor with all the women at the castle.

Jer. Nay, Father; I must attend on our prisoner here, who has most need of ghostly assistance.

Prior. (*to another Monk.*) Go thou, Anselmo; thou hast given comfort to many a dying penitent.

Monk. I thank you, Father, for the preference; but Paul is the best of us all for administering comfort to the dying; and there is a sickness come over my heart o' the sudden, that makes me unfit for the office.

Prior. (*to Paul.*) Thou wilt go then, my good son.

Paul. I beseech you, don't send me, reverend Father; I ne'er escaped contagion in my life, where malady or fever were to be had.

Prior. Who will go then?

(*A deep silence.*)

Ben. What! has no one faith enough in the protection of St. Maurice, even purchased, as it is about to be, by the shedding of human blood, to venture upon this dangerous duty? I will go then, Father, though I am sometimes of a doubting spirit.

Prior. Go, and St. Maurice protect thee!

[EXIT *Ben.*

Let him go; it is well that we get rid of him for the night, should they happily detain him so long at the castle. — He is a troublesome, close-searching, self-willed fellow. He hath no zeal for the order. Were a miser to bequeath his possessions to our monastery, he would assist the disappointed heir himself to find out a flaw in the deed. — But retire to your cells, my sons, and employ yourselves in prayer and devotion, till the great bell warn you to attend the execution.

[EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

An Apartment in the Castle. Enter LEONORA and AGNES, speaking as they enter.

Ag. But she is asleep now; and is so much and so suddenly better, that the confessor, when he comes, will be dissatisfied, I fear, that we have called him from his cell at such an unreasonable hour.

Leo. Let him come, nevertheless; don't send to prevent him.

Ag. He will be unwilling to be detained, for they are engaged in no common matters to-night at the monastery. Count Osterloo, as I told you before, is doing voluntary penance at the shrine of St. Maurice to stop the progress of this terrible malady.

Leo. I remember thou did'st.

Ag. Ah, Marchioness ! you would not say so thus faintly, had you seen him march through the pass with his soldiers. He is the bravest and most graceful man, though somewhat advanced in years, that I ever beheld. — Ah, had you but seen him !

Leo. I have seen him, Agnes.

Ag. And I spoke of him all the while, yet you did not tell me this before ! Ah, my noble Mistress and Friend ! the complexion of your cheek is altered ; you have indeed seen him, and you have not seen him with indifference.

Leo. Think as thou wilt about this. He was the friend and fellow-soldier of my Lord, when we first married ; though before my marriage I had never seen him.

Ag. Friend ! Your Lord was then in the decline of life ; there must have been great disparity in their friendship.

Leo. They were friends, however ; for the Marquis liked society younger than himself ; and I, who had been hurried into an unequal marriage, before I could judge for myself, was sometimes foolish enough to compare them together.

Ag. Aye, that was natural enough. (*Eagerly.*)
And what happened then?

Leo. (*offended.*) What happened then! (*drawing herself up proudly.*) Nothing happened then, but subduing the foolish fancy of a girl, which was afterwards amply repaid by the self-approbation and dignity of a woman.

Ag. Pardon me, Madam; I ought to have supposed all this. But you have been long a widow, and Osterloo is still unmarried; what prevented you when free?

Leo. I was ignorant what the real state of his sentiments had been in regard to me. But had this been otherwise; received, as I was, into the family of my Lord, the undowried daughter of a petty nobleman; and left as I now am, by his confiding love, the sole guardian of his children and their fortunes; I could never think of supporting a second lord on the wealth entrusted to me by the first, to the injury of his children. As nothing, therefore, has ever happened in consequence of this weakness of my youth, nothing ever shall.

Ag. This is noble.

Leo. It is right. ——— But here comes the father Confessor.

Enter BENEDICT.

You are welcome, good Father! yet I am almost ashamed to see you; for our sick person has become suddenly well again, and is now in a deep sleep. I fear I shall appear to you capricious

and inconsiderate in calling you up at so late an hour.

Ben. Be not uneasy, Lady, upon this account : I am glad to have an occasion for being absent from the monastery for some hours, if you will permit me to remain here so long.

Leo. What mean you, Father Benedict ? Your countenance is solemn and sorrowful : what is going on at the monastery ? (*He shakes his head.*) Ha ! will they be severe with him in a voluntary penance, submitted to for the good of the order ? — What is the nature of the penance ? It is to continue, I am told, but one night.

Ben. It will, indeed, soon be over.

Leo. And will he be gone on the morrow ?

Ben. His spirit will, but his body remains with us for ever.

Leo. (*uttering a shriek.*) Death, dost thou mean ? — O horror ! horror ! Is this the expiation ? Oh most horrible, most unjust !

Ben. Indeed I consider it as such. Though guilty, by his own confession, of murder, committed, many years since, under the frenzy of passion ; it belongs not to us to inflict the punishment of death upon a guilty soul, taken so suddenly and unprepared for its doom.

Leo. Murder ! didst thou say murder ? Oh Osterloo, Osterloo ! hast thou been so barbarous ? and art thou in this terrible state ? — Must thou thus end thy days, and so near me too !

Ben. You seem greatly moved, noble Leo-

nora : would you could do something more for him than lament.

Leo. (catching hold of him eagerly.)

Can I do any thing? Speak, Father : O tell me how ! I will do any thing and every thing. — Alas, alas ! my vassals are but few, and cannot be assembled immediately.

Ben. Force were useless. Your vassals, if they were assembled, would not be persuaded to attack the sacred walls of a monastery.

Leo. I did indeed rave foolishly : but what else can be done? — Take these jewels and every thing of value in the castle, if they will bribe those who guard him, to let him escape. — Think of it. — O think well of it, good Benedict !

Ag. I have heard that there is a secret passage, leading from the prison-chamber of the monastery under its walls, and opening to the free country at the bottom of the rocks.

Ben. By every holy saint, so there is ! and the most sordid of our brothers is entrusted with the key of it. But who will be his conductor ? None but a Monk of the Order may pass the soldiers who guard him ; and the Monk who should do it, must fly from his country for ever, and break his sacred vows. I can oppose the weak fears and injustice of my brethren, for misfortunes and disgust of the world, not superstitious veneration for monastic sanctity, has covered my head with a cowl ; but this I cannot do.

Ag. There is the dress of a Monk of your Order in the old wardrobe of the castle, if some person were disguised in it.

Leo. Thanks to thee ! thanks to thee, my happy Agnes ! I will be that person. — I will put on the disguise. ————— Good Father ! your face gives consent to this.

Ben. If there be time ; but I left them preparing for the execution.

Leo. There is, there is ! — Come with me to the wardrobe, and we'll set out for the monastery forthwith. — Come, come ! a few moments will carry us there.

[EXIT *hastily, followed by Ag. and Ben.*

SCENE IV.

A Wood near the Castle ; the Stage quite dark :

Enter Two Servants with Torches.

1st Ser. This must surely be the entry to the path, where my Lady ordered us to wait for those same Monks.

2d Ser. Yes ; I know it well, for yonder is the postern. It is the nearest path to the monastery, but narrow and difficult. The night is cold : I hope they will not keep us long waiting.

1st Ser. I heard the sound of travellers coming up the eastern avenue, and they may linger belike ; for Monks are marvellously fond of great people and of strangers ; at least the good Fathers of our monastery are.

2d Ser. Aye, in their late Prior's time they lived like lords themselves; and they are not very humble at present. — But there's light from the postern : here they come.

Enter BENEDICT, LEONORA disguised like a Monk, and AGNES with a Peasant's cloak thrown over her.

Leo. (speaking as she enters.) It is well thought of, good Benedict. Go thou before me to gain brother Baldwin, in the first place; and I'll wait without on the spot we have agreed upon, until I hear the signal.

Ben. Thou comprehendest me completely, Brother; so God speed us both!

(To 1st Ser.)

Torch-man, go thou with me. This is the right path, I trust?

1st Ser. Fear not, Father; I know it well.

[Exit Ben. and 1st Ser.]

Leo. (to Agnes, while she waves her hand to 2d Servant to retire to a greater distance.)

After I am admitted to the monastery, fail not to wait for me at the mouth of the secret passage.

Ag. Fear not : Benedict has described it so minutely, I cannot fail to discover it.

Leo. What steps are those behind us? Some body following us from the castle?

Enter 3d Servant in haste.

3d Ser. There are travellers arrived at the gate, and desire to be admitted for the night.

Leo. In an evil hour they come. Return, dear Agnes, and receive them. Benighted strangers, no doubt. Excuse my absence any how: go quickly.

Ag. And leave you to proceed alone?

Leo. Care not for me: there is an energy within me now, that bids defiance to fear.

(Beckons to 2d Servant, who goes out before her with the torch, and EXIT.)

Ag. (muttering to herself, as she turns to the castle.) The evil spirit hath brought travellers to us at this moment: but I'll send them to their chambers right quickly, and join her at the secret passage, notwithstanding.

[EXEUNT.]

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *The Prison-chamber of the Monastery : OSTERLOO is discovered, sitting in a bending Posture, with his clenched Hands pressed upon his Knees and his Eyes fixed on the Ground, JEROME standing by him.*

Jer. Nay, sink not thus, my Son ; the mercy of Heaven is infinite. Let other thoughts enter thy soul : let penitence and devotion subdue it.

Ost. Nothing but one short moment of division between this state of humanity and that which is to follow ! The executioner lets fall his axe, and the dark veil is rent ; the gulf is uncovered ; the regions of anguish are before me.

Jer. My Son, my Son ! this must not be ; thine imagination overpowers thy devotion.

Ost. The dead are there ; and what welcome shall the murderer receive from that assembled host ? Oh, the terrible form that stalks forth to meet me ! the stretching out of that hand ! the greeting of that horrible smile ! And it is thou, who must lead me before the tremendous majesty of my offended Maker ! Incomprehensible and dreadful ! What thoughts can give an image of that which overpowers all thought !

(Clasping his hands tightly over his head, and bending himself almost to the ground.)

Jer. (after a pause.) Art thou entranced? art thou asleep? art thou still in those inward agonies of imagination? (*Touching him softly.*) Speak to me.

Ost. (starting up.) Are they come for me? They shall not yet: I'll strangle the first man that lays hold of me. (*Grasping Jerome by the throat.*)

Jer. Let go your hold, my Lord; I did but touch you gently to rouse you from your stupor.

(*Osterloo lets go his hold, and Jerome shrinks to a distance.*)

Ost. I have grasped thee, then, too roughly. But shrink not from me thus. Strong men have fallen by my arm, but a child might contend with me now.

(*Throwing himself back again into his chair, and bursting into tears.*)

Jer. Forgive me, my Son, there was a wildness in your eyes that made me afraid.

Ost. Thou need'st not be afraid: thou art a good man, and hast days of life still before thee; thou need'st not be afraid. —————

But, as thou art a good man, speak to me, I conjure thee, as a man, not as a monk: answer me as the true sense and reason of a man doth convince thee.

Jer. I will, my Son.

Ost. Dost thou in truth believe, that the very instant after life has left the body, we are forthwith awake and conscious in the world of Spirits? No intermediate state of slumbering insensibility between?

Jer. It is indeed my belief. Death is but a short though awful pass ; as it were a winking of the eyes for a moment. We shut them in this world and open them in the next : and there we open them with such increased vividness of existence, that this life, in comparison, will appear but as a state of slumber and of dreams.

———— But wherefore dost thou cross thine arms so closely on thy breast, and coil thyself together so wretchedly ? What is the matter, my Son ? Art thou in bodily anguish ?

Ost. The chilly night shoots icy coldness through me.

Jer. O regard not the poor feelings of a fleshly frame, which thou so soon must part withal : a little time will now put an end to every thing that nature can endure.

Ost. (*raising his head quickly.*)

Ha ! how soon ? Has the bell struck again since I listened to it last ?

Jer. No ; but it will soon strike, and day-break is at hand. Rouse ye then, and occupy the few minutes that remain in acts of devotion becoming thine unhappy state. O, my Son, pour out thy soul in penitent prayers to an offended but merciful God. We, too, will pray for thee. Months, nay years after thy death, masses shall be said for the repose of thy soul, that it may at last be received into bliss. O my unhappy Son ! pour forth thy spirit to God ; and let thy prayers also ascend to our blessed Saint and Martyr, who will intercede for thee.

Ost. I cannot: I have not thoughts for prayer, — the gulph yawns before me — the unknown, the unbounded, the unfathomable! — Prayers! prayers! what prayers hath despair?

Jer. Hold, hold, refractory Sprit! This obstinacy is destruction. ————— I must call in brother Bernard to assist me: I cannot be answerable alone, in a service of such infinite moment.

(EXIT; and after a pause, in which Osterloo seems absorbed in the stupor of despair, enter LEONORA disguised.)

Leo. (coming eagerly forward, and then stopping short to look at him.)

There is some mistake in this: it is not Osterloo. ————— It is, it is! but Oh, how changed! Thy hand, great God! has been upon him.

(Going closer to him.)

Osterloo! Osterloo!

Ost. I hear thee, Father.

Leo. (throwing aside her disguise.)

Oh no! it is no Father. Lift up thine eyes and see an old friend before thee, with deliverance in her hand. (Holding out a key.)

Ost. (looking up wildly.) Is it a sound in my ears, or did any one say deliverance?

(Gazing on her.)

What thing art thou? A form of magic or delusion?

Leo. Neither, Count Osterloo; but an old friend, bringing this key in her hand for thy deliverance. Yet much I fear thou hast not strength enough to rise and follow me.

Ost. (bounding from his seat.) I have strength for any thing if there be deliverance in it. — Where go we? They will be upon us immediately.

Leo. (lifting a small lamp from a table, and holding it to examine the opposite wall.)

The door, as he described it, is to the right of a small projection of the wall. — Here — here it is! *(Opens a small door, and beckons Osterloo to follow her.)*

Ost. Yes, blessed being! I will follow thee. — Ha! they are coming!

(Strides hastily to the door, while Leonora holds up the lamp to light him into it, and then going in herself, shuts the door softly behind her.)

SCENE II.

An old ruinous Vault, with a strong grated Door on one side, through which the Moon-beams are gleaming: on the other Side, an old winding staircase, leading from the upper Regions of the Monastery, from which a feeble Light is seen, increasing by degrees; and presently LEONORA appears, descending the Stairs with a Lamp in her Hand, followed by OSTERLOO.

As she enters, something on the Wall catches her Robe, and she turns round to disentangle it, bending her Face close to the Light.

Ost. (stopping to assist her, and then gazing on her.)

Thou art something I have known and loved somewhere, though it has passed away from my mind with all my better thoughts. —————

Great power of Heaven! art thou Leonora?

Leo. (smiling.) Dost thou know me now?

Ost. I do, I do! My heart knew thee before, but my memory did not.

(Kneeling and kissing both her hands.)

And so it is to thee—thou whom I first loved—
Pardon me, pardon me!—thou whom I loved,
and dared not love; thou from whom I fled
to be virtuous—thou art my deliverer. Oh!
had I never loved another after thee, it had
been well. ————— Knowest thou
it is a murderer thou art saving?

Leo. Say no more of this: I know thy story,
and I came ———

Ost. O! thou camest like a blessed Spirit to
deliver me from many horrors. I was terribly
beset: thou hast snatched me from a tremendous
brink.

Leo. I hope so, if this key prove to be the
right one.

Ost. (alarmed.) Dost thou doubt it?

Leo. It seems to me smaller than it ought to
be, when I consider that massive door.

Ost. Give it me.

(Snatches the key from her, and runs to the door; then turns the key in the lock, and finding it too small, stamps with his feet, throws it from him, and holds up his clenched hands in despair.)

Leo. Oh, cross fate! But I'll return again for the right one. Baldwin cannot be so wicked as to deceive me, and Benedict is still on the watch, near the door of the prison-chamber. Stay here till I return.

(She ascends the stairs, whilst Osterloo leans his back to the wall, frequently moving his body up and down with impatient agitation : a bell tolls ; Osterloo starts from his place, and Leonora descends again, re-entering in great alarm.)

Leo. Oh! I cannot go now: that bell tolls to warn them to the great hall: I shall meet them on their way. What is to be done? The strength of three men could not force that heavy door, and thou art feeble and spent.

Ost. *(running furiously to the door.)*

Despair has strength for any thing.

(Seizes hold of the door, and, making two or three terrible efforts, bursts it open with a loud jar.)

Leo. Supernatural strength has assisted thee: now thou art free.

(As Osterloo and Leonora are about to pass on through the door, Wovelreid and three

armed Soldiers appear in the porch beyond it, and oppose their passage.)

Wov. Hold! we are the Prior's Soldiers, and will suffer no prisoner to escape.

Ost. Those who dare prevent me!

(Wrests a sword from one of the Soldiers, and, fighting furiously, forces his way past them all, they not daring to pursue him; when Woveldreid seizing on Leonora to prevent her from following him, she calls out.)

Leo. O let me pass! and I'll reward you nobly.

Ost. *(returning to rescue Leonora.)*

Let go thine unhallowed grasp.

Leo. For Heaven's sake care not for me! Save thyself—save thyself! I am in no danger. Turn not again to fight, when such terrible odds are against thee.

Ost. I have arms in my hand now, and my foes are before me! *(Fights fiercely again, till Morand, with a strong band of Soldiers, entering the porch behind him, he is overpowered and secured; Leonora sinks down by the wall in a swoon.)*

Wov. Give me a rope. We must bind him securely; for the Devil has put the strength of ten men into him, though, but half an hour ago, his face was as pale as a moon-light icicle, and he could scarcely walk without being supported.

Mor. Alas, alas ! his face has returned to its former colour ; his head sinks on his breast, and his limbs are again feeble and listless. I would rather see him fighting like a fiend than see him thus.

Wov. Let us move him hence ; would'st thou stop to lament over him ?

Mor. It was base work in Baldwin to betray their plot to the Prior, for he took their money first, I'll be sworn.

Wov. He had betrayed the Prior then, and all the community besides.

Mor. Well, let us move him hence : this is no business of ours.

[*EXEUNT Morand, Wovelreid and Soldiers, leading out Osterloo.*]

Enter AGNES by the grated door, and discovers LEONORA on the ground.

Ag. O holy Virgin ! On the ground, fainting and ill ! Have the barbarians left her thus ?
(*Chafing her temples and hand.*)

She begins to revive. It is me, my dearest Lady : look up and see me : those men are all gone.

Leo. And Osterloo with them ?

Ag. Alas, he is.

Leo. It is fated so. Let me lie where I am : I cannot move yet, my good Agnes.

Ag. Nay, do not yet despair of saving the Count.

Leo. (starting up and catching hold of her eagerly.)

How so? is it possible?

Ag. The travellers, arrived at the castle, are the Imperial Ambassador and his train. Night overtook them on the mountains, and they are now making merry in the hall.

Leo. Thank Heaven for this! Providence has sent him hither. I'll go to him instantly, and conjure him to interpose his authority to save the life of Osterloo. Representing his liege Lord, the Emperor, the Prior dare not disobey his commands, and the gates of the monastery will be opened at his call. Who comes here? Let us go.

Re-enter MORAND.

Mor. (to Leonora.) You are revived again: I am glad to see it. Pardon me, Lady, that I forgot you in your extremity, and let me conduct you safely to the castle.

Leo. I thank you, but my servants are without. Let me go. Don't follow me, I pray you.

Mor. Let me support you through the porch, and I'll leave you to their care, since you desire it.

[EXEUNT, *Leonora supported by Morand and Agnes.*

SCENE. III.

A grand Hall, prepared for the Execution ; Soldiers are discovered drawn up on each side of the Scaffold, with BENEDICT and several of the Monks on the front of the Stage. A bell tolls at measured Intervals, with a deep pause between ; after which enter MORAND, hanging his Head sorrowfully.)

Ben. (to Mor.) Is he come forth ?

1st Monk. Hast thou seen him ?

Mor. They are leading him hither, but they move slowly.

1st Monk. Thou hast seen him then ; how does he look now ?

Mor. I cannot tell thee. These few hours have done on him the work of many years : he seems broken and haggarded with age, and his quenched eyes are fixed in their sockets, like one who walks in sleep.

Ben. Alas, alas ! how changed in little time the bold and gallant Osterloo !

1st Monk. Have I not told thee, Morand, that fear will sometimes couch under the brazen helmet as well as the woollen cowl ?

Mor. Fear, dost thou call it ! Set him this moment in the field of battle, with death threatening him from a hundred points at once, and he would brave it most valiantly.

Ben. (preventing 1st Monk from answering.)
Hush, Brother ! Be not so warm, good Lieu-

tenant; we believe what thou sayest most perfectly. The bravest mind is capable of fear, though it fears no mortal man. A brave man fears not man; and an innocent and brave man united, fears nothing.

Mor. Aye, now you speak reason: call it fear then if you will. — But the Prior comes; let us go to our places.

(They arrange themselves; and then enter the Prior, with a train of Monks, who likewise arrange themselves: a pause, in which the bell tolls as before, and enter OSTERLOO, supported by JEROME and PAUL, WOVELREID, and Soldiers following.)

Prior. *(meeting him with solemnity.)* Count Osterloo; in obedience to the will of Heaven, for our own preservation, and the just punishment of guilt, I am compelled with the Monks of this monastery over whom I preside, to see duly executed within the time prescribed, this dismal act of retribution. — You have I trust, with the help of these holy men, as well as a few short moments would allow, closed your mortal account with Heaven: if there be aught that rests upon your mind, regarding worldly concerns which you leave behind you unsettled, let me know your last will, and it shall be obeyed.

(To Jerome, after pausing for an answer.)
Dost thou think he understands me?

Jer. (to Osterloo.) Did you hear, my Son, what the Prior has been saying to you?

Ost. I heard words through a multitude of sounds.

Jer. It was the Prior, desiring to know if you have any wishes to fulfil, regarding worldly affairs left behind you unsettled. — Perhaps to your soldiers you may.

Ost. (interrupting him eagerly and looking wildly round.) My soldiers! are they here?

Jer. Ah, no! they are not here; they are housed for the night in their distant quarters: they will not be here till the setting of to-morrow's sun.

Ost. (groaning deeply.) To-morrow's sun!

Jer. Is there any wish you would have conveyed to them? Are there any of your officers to whom you would send a message or token of remembrance?

Ost. Ye speak again imperfectly, through many ringing sounds.

(*Jer. repeats the question in a slow distinct voice.*)

Ost. Aye there is: these, these ——

(*Endeavouring to tear off his cincture and some military ornaments from his dress.*)

I cannot hit upon these fastenings.

Jer. We'll assist you, my Son.

(*Undoing his cincture or girdle, &c.*)

Ost. (still endeavouring to do it himself.)

My sword too, and my daggers. — My last remembrance to them both.

Jer. To whom, my Lord?

Ost. Both — all of them.

Ben. (*who has kept sorrowfully at some distance, now approaching eagerly.*)

Urge him no more : his officers will themselves know what names he would have uttered.

(*Turning to Ost. with an altered voice.*)

Yes, noble Count ; they shall be given as you desire with your farewell affection to all your brave followers.

Ost. I thank ye.

Jer. And this is all?

Ost. Nay, nay!

Ben. What is there besides?

Prior. (*angrily.*) There is too much of this : and some sudden rescue may prevent us.

Ben. Nay, reverend Father, there is no fear of this : you would not cut short the last words of a dying man?

Prior. And must I be guided by thy admonitions? beware ; though Baldwin has not named thee, I know it is thou who art the traitor.

Ben. There is but one object at present to be thought of, and with your leave, reverend Father, I will not be deterred from it. (*To Ost. again in a voice of tenderness.*) What is there besides, noble Osterloo, that you would wish us to do?

Ost. There is something.

Ben. What is it, my Lord?

Ost. I wot not.

Ben. Then let it rest.

Ost. Nay, nay ! This — this ——

(Pulling a ring from his finger, which falls on the ground.)

My hands will hold nothing.

Ben. I have found it; and what shall I do with it ?

Ost. *(in a faint hurried voice.)* Leonora — Leonora.

Ben. I understand you, my Lord.

Prior. I am under the necessity, Count Osterloo, of saying, your time is run to its utmost limit : let us call upon you now for your last exertion of nature. These good brothers must conduct you to the scaffold. *(Jer. and Paul support him towards the scaffold, while Benedict retires to a distance, and turns his back to it.)*

Jer. Rest upon me, my Son, you have but few paces to go.

Ost. The ground sinks under me ; my feet tread upon nothing.

Jer. We are now at the foot of the scaffold, and there are two steps to mount : lean upon us more firmly.

Ost. *(stumbling)* It is dark ; I cannot see.

Jer. Alas, my Son ! there is a blaze of torches round you.

(After they are on the scaffold.)

Now, in token of thy faith in heaven, and forgiveness of all men, raise up thy clasped hands.

(Seeing Ost. make a feeble effort, he raises them for him in a posture of devotion.)

And now to heaven's mercy we commit thee.

(*Jerome and Paul retire, and two Executioners prepare him for the block, and assist him to kneel. He then lays down his head, and they hold his hands, while a third Executioner stands with the raised axe.*)

1st Ex. (speaking close into his ear.)

Press my hand when you are ready for the stroke. *(A long pause.)*

He gives no sign.

2d Ex. Stop, he will immediately.

(A second pause.)

Does he not ?

1st Ex. No.

Prior. Then give the stroke without it.

(3d Ex. prepares to give the stroke, when the Imperial Ambassador rushes into the hall, followed by Leonora and Agnes, and a numerous train.)

Am. Stop the execution ! In the name of your liege Lord the Emperor, I command you to stop upon your peril. My Lord Prior, this is a treacherous and clandestine use of your seignorial power. This noble servant of our Imperial Master (pointing to Osterloo) I take under my protection ; and you must first deprive an Imperial Ambassador of life, ere one hair of his head fall to the ground.

Ben. (running to the scaffold.) Up, noble Osterloo ! Raise up thy head : thou art rescued : thou art free.

Leo. Rise, noble Osterloo ! dost thou not know the voice that calls thee ?

Ben. He moves not ; he is in a swoon.

(Raises Osterloo from the block, whilst Leonora bends over him with anxious tenderness.)

Leo. He is ghastly pale : yet it surely can be but a swoon. Chafe his hands, good Benedict, while I bathe his temples.

(After trying to restore him.)

Oh, no, no ! no change takes place. What thinkest thou of it ? Is there any life here ?

Ben. In truth I know not : this seems to me the fixed ghastly visage of compleat death.

Leo. Oh, no, no ! he will be restored. No stroke has fallen upon him : it cannot be death. Ha ! is not that something ? did not his lips move ?

Ben. No, Lady ; you but deceive yourself ; they moved not : they are closed for ever.

Leo. *(wringing her hands.)* Oh it is so ! it is so !—after all thy struggles and exertions of despair, this is thy miserable end ! — Alas, alas ! thou who didst bear thy crest so proudly in many a well fought field ; this is thy miserable end !

(Turning away, and hiding her face in the bosom of Agnes.)

Ambass. *(examining the body more closely.)*

I think in very truth he is dead.

1st Gentleman of his Train. Yes ; the face

never looks thus, till every spark of life is extinguished.

Ambass. (*turning fiercely to the Prior.*) How is this, Prior? What sorcery has been here, that your block alone should destroy its victim, when the stroke of the axe has been wanting? What account shall I carry to my master of the death of his gallant General?

Prior. No sorcery hath been practised on the deceased: his own mind has dealt with him alone, and produced the effects you behold. And, when you return to Lewis of Bavaria your Master; tell him that his noble General, free from personal injury of any kind, died, within the walls of this monastery, of fear.

Ambass. Nay, nay, my good Prior; put the fool's cap on thine own head, and tell him this tale thyself. ————— Fear! Osterloo and fear coupled together! when the lion and the fawn are found couching in the same lair, we will believe this.

Prior. All the Brothers of the order will attest it.

Ambass. Away with the testimony of your cowed witnesses!

(*Beckoning Morand to come near.*)

Morand, thou art a brave fellow; I have known thee of old, thou art the Prior's officer indeed; but thou art now under my protection, and shalt be received into the Emperor's service with encreased rank: speak the truth then, boldly; how died Count Osterloo?

Mor. In very truth then, my Lord, according to my simple thoughts, he died even as the Prior has told you.

Ambass. Out upon thy hireling's tongue ! art thou not ashamed, thyself wearing a soldier's garb, to blast a soldier's fame ? There is no earthly thing the brave Osterloo was ever known to fear.

Mor. You say true, my Lord ; and on my sword's point I'll maintain it against any man as stoutly as yourself. But here is a pious Monk (*pointing to Jerome*) who will explain to you what I should speak of but lamely.

Jer. With the Prior's permission, my Lord, if you will retire with me a little while, I'll inform you of this mysterious event, even simply as it happened. And perhaps you will then confess, that, called upon suddenly, under circumstances impressing powerfully the imagination, to put off this mortal frame and stand forth in that tremendous presence, before which this globe, with all its mighty empires, hangs but as a crisped rain-drop, shivering on the threaded gossamer ; the bravest mind may, if a guilty one, feel that within which is too powerful for human nature to sustain.

Ambass. Explain it as thou wilt ; I shall listen to thee : but think not to cheat our Imperial Master of his revenge for the loss of his gallant General. I shall not fail, my Lord Prior, to report to him the meek spirit of your Christian authority, which has made the general weal of

the community subservient to your private revenge ; and another month, I trust, shall not pass over our heads, till a worthier man (*pointing to Benedict*) shall possess this power which you have so greatly abused. —————

————— Let the body be removed, and laid in solemn state, till it be delivered into the hands of those brave troops, who shall inter it with the honours of a Soldier.

THE END OF THE DREAM.



THE SIEGE:

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN :

COUNT VALDEMERE.

BARON BAURCHEL.

WALTER BAURCHEL, *his Brother.*

ANTONIO, *Baron de Bertrand.*

DARTZ, *his Friend.*

Page to Count Valdemere.

LORIMORE, *his Valet.*

HOVELBERG, *a Jewel or Diamond Merchant.*

Soldiers, Servants, &c.

WOMEN :

COUNTESS VALDEMERE, *Mother to the Count.*

LIVIA.

JEANETTA, *Woman to the Countess.*

NINA,

Ladies, &c.

Scene, *a Castle on the French confines of Germany.*

THE SIEGE.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *A Grove near the Castle, with Part of the embattled Walls seen through the Trees:*
Enter BARON BAURCHEL *and* WALTER BAURCHEL, *speaking as they enter.*

Bar. HAVE done, Brother? I can bear it no longer. Hadst thou been bred in a cave of Kamschatka, instead of a mansion of civilized Europe, this savage plainness had been endurable: but —

Walt. I call a turnip a turnip, indeed, when other people say it is a peach or a nectarine; I call a pig a pig too, though they swear it is a fawn or an antelope; and they look at me, I confess somewhat suspiciously, as if they expected to see a tail peeping from under my jerkin, or fur upon my hands like a bear.— You would have me civilized, would you? It is too late in the day now, good sooth!

Bar. Yes, the time is indeed gone by. This bachelor's life has brutified thee past all redemption. Why did you not marry, Brother?

Walt. Nay, you who have met with so many goddesses and creatures of perfection in the world, why did not you marry, Brother? I who could light upon nothing better than women — mere women; every one of them too with some fault or failing belonging to her, as obvious as those white hairs that now look from under your peruke, was it any marvel that I did not marry?

Bar. Had your wife possessed as many faults as you do wrinkles on your forehead, you would have been the better for her; she would have saved thee, as I said before, from brutification.

Walt. And yours would have saved you from dupification, dotification, and as many 'fications besides, as an old sentimental, hypocritical, greedy Dulcinea, can fasten on a rhyme-writing beau, who is stepping most unwillingly, with his lace-cloaked hose, over that ungracious line of division, that marks out his grand climacteric.

Bar. Hypocritical! greedy! you don't know the delicacy of her mind: nothing can be more tender, more refined, more disinterested than her attachment to me. You don't understand her.

Walt. Perhaps I don't understand the attachments of the fair sex now-a-days. An old rich neighbour of mine informed me the other night that he is going to marry his poor friend Spendall's youngest daughter, who has actually fallen in love with him; and nothing, as he tells me, almost in your own words, can be more tender,

more disinterested than her attachment. Not understanding these matters, brother, I'll freely confess to you I did not give much credit to his story; but I may be wrong nevertheless. I dare say you believe it entirely.

Bar. Ridiculous! What proofs can the fool possibly receive of her attachment?

Walt. The very same which the Countess so condescendingly vouchsafes to yourself; she accepts of his presents.

Bar. The very same! No, no, Walter Baurchel; very different. Does not every smile of her countenance, every look of her eyes, involuntarily express her partiality for me?

Walt. Say, rather, every word of her tongue.

Bar. With what generous enthusiasm did she not praise my sonnet to Sensibility.

Walt. Aye, she is generous in what costs her little; for what are two or three lies, more or less, in the week's confession between her and Father Benedict? She'll scarcely eat a mouthful of partridge the less for it.

Bar. O heartless infidel! thou would'st mistrust the fond smiles of a mother caressing her rosy-faced infant.

Walt. By my faith, so I would, Baron, if that same infant brought a diamond necklace or a gold snuff-box in his hand for every kiss she bestowed upon him. Every sonnet you write costs you, one with another, a hundred louis d'ors. If all the money vanity filches from rich poets could be transferred to the pockets of poor ones, verse-

making would be as good a business as shoemaking, or any other handicraft in the country.

Bar. Hold thy unhallowed tongue! These subjects are not for thy rude handling. What is all this grumbling intended for? Tell me what you want, and have done with it; you who pique yourself so much on your plain speaking.

Walt. Well, then, I want you to let the next six sonnets you write go unpraised, and give the money that should have paid for the praising of them, six hundred louis d'ors, as I reckon, to Antonio. Is it not a shame that your own ward and heir, in love with the Lady of this castle, as you very well know, cannot urge his suit with advantage, for want of the equipage and appendages becoming his rank; while this conceited Count, by means of his disinterested mother, drains your purse so freely; and is thereby enabled to ruin the pretensions of him whom you ought to support?

Bar. His pretensions are absurd, and cannot be supported.

Walt. Why absurd? Is he not as brave, as well born, as handsome, too, as his rival?

Bar. What signify all his good qualities? In the presence of his mistress he is an idiot.

Walt. It is true, he loses all possession of himself in that situation, and therefore she despises him, while the gay confidence of the other delights her; but he should be supported and encouraged.

Bar. How encouraged? Silly fellow!

Walt. He feels too sensibly his disadvantages, and they depress him. He feels that he is not entitled to pretend to Livia, but as the probable heir of your estates; while your fantastical fondness for this woman and her son makes it a doubtful matter whether you may not be tempted — But hush! here she comes with her new-ruddled face, bearing her morning's potation of flattery with her, for a stomach of most wonderful digestion.

Enter Countess VALDEMERE, who, after slightly noticing WALTER, runs up caressingly to the Baron.

Countess. How do you do, my dear Baron? I hope you have passed the night in sweet repose. — Yet, why do I hope it? You scarcely deserve that I should.

Bar. And why so, Belinda?

Walt. (aside, making a lip at them.) Belinda, too! Sweet innocents!

Bar. Why should you not hope that I have passed the night in repose?

Countess. Because I am vindictive, and would be revenged upon you for making me pass a very sleepless one.

Walt. (aside.) Will she make love to him before one's very face!

Bar. Then I am a culprit indeed, but an innocent one. What kept you awake?

Countess. O, those verses of yours! those dear

provoking verses ! they haunted me the whole night. (*Baron bows.*) But don't think I am going to talk to you of their beauties — those tender easy graces which they possess, in common with every thing that comes from your pen : I am going to tell you of their defects. You know well my friendship for you, my dear Baron, makes me sometimes severe.

Bar. (*aside to Walt.*) There now, you churl, do you call this flattery ? (*Aloud.*) My dear Countess, your severity is kindness.

Countess. Receive it then as such ; for indeed I must be very severe on the two last lines of the second stanza, which have disturbed me exceedingly. In the verses of an ordinary poet I should not find fault with them ; but in a work where every thing besides is easy, harmonious, and correct, the slightest defect is conspicuous ; and I must positively insist on your altering them, though you should hate me for being so fastidious.

Bar. (*aside to Walt.*) There now, ungracious canker-tongue, do you call this hypocrisy ? (*Aloud.*) Madam, I kiss the rod in so fair and so friendly a hand. Nay, it is a sceptre, to which I bow with devotion.

Countess. (*to Walt.*) You see, good Sir, I take great liberties with the Baron, as, I doubt not, with the privilege of a brother, you yourself sometimes do.

Walt. Yes, Madam, but my way of finding

fault with him is somewhat different from yours.

Countess. Yet you still find his generous spirit, I am sure, submissive to the rod.

Walt. I can't say I do, Madam.

Countess. You are unfortunate enough, perhaps, to use it unskilfully.

Walt. I am fortunate at present, however, in receiving so good a lesson from you, Madam.

Countess. O no! there is no skill with me. There are persons to whom one cannot say one-half of what one really thinks, without being deemed a flatterer.

Walt. In this, however, I have been more fortunate than you, Madam; for I have said to him what I have really thought for these forty years past, and have entirely escaped that imputation.

Bar. Aye, flattery is a sin thou wilt never do penance for. Thou can'st rub the side of a galled jade with any tender-hearted innocent in Christendom, and be mighty surprised withal that the poor devil should be so unreasonable as to winch at it.

Countess. Nay, nay, Baron! say not this of so good a brother, the shrewdness and penetration of whose mind are tempered, I am sure, with many amiable qualities.

Walt. Nay, pray, Madam, spare me, and deal with but one of us at a time. Such words will intoxicate a poor younger brother like myself, who is scarcely able to get a fowl for his pot, or

new facings for his doublet, and cannot therefore be supposed to be accustomed to them.

Countess. Sir, I understand not your insinuation.

Bar. Regard him not, Madam : how should a mind, noble and delicate as your own, comprehend the unworthy thoughts of contemptible meanness ? — Let me conduct you to company more deserving of you. Our fair hostess, I suppose, is already in her grotto.

Countess. No, she and my son are to follow me. But you must not go to the grotto with me now : nobody is to see it till the evening.

Bar. (*offering to lead her out.*) A step or two only.

Countess. O, not a step for the world.

[*EXIT, Baron kissing her hand as she goes off.*]

Bar. (*turning fiercely upon Walt.*) Thy unmannerly meanness is intolerable. Still hinting at the presents she receives. Greedy as thou call'st her, she never asked a gift from me in her life, excepting my picture in miniature, which could only be valuable to her as she prized the original.

Walt. Say rather, as her jeweller shall prize the goodly brilliants that surround it.

Bar. What do you mean ?

Walt. What I should have told you before, if she had not interrupted us ; that her trinket-broker is this very morning coming secretly, by appointment, to the castle, to treat with her

for certain things of great value which she wishes to dispose of; and if your picture be not amongst them, I'll forfeit my head upon it.

Bar. It is false.

Walt. Here comes one who will confirm what I say.

Enter DARTZ.

Walt. I'm glad to see you, Chevalier, for you can bear evidence to a story of mine that will not be believed else.

Dart. This is a better reason for being so than most of my friends have to give.

Walt. Is not Hovelberg, the jeweller, coming secretly to the castle to-day to confer with the Countess?

Dart. Yes, he told me so himself; and added, with a significant smile, that she had some of her old ware to dispose of.

Walt. Do you hear that, brother? It was as much as so say, she had often had such truckings with him before. Aye, you are not the only man who has thought his own dear resemblance lapped warmly behind the stomacher of his mistress, while, stripped of its jewels, it has been tossed into the drawer of some picture-monger, to be changed into a General of the last century, or one of the Grand-dukes of Austria. As for you, brother, they'll put a black velvet cap on your head, and make you a good sombre doctor of theology.

Bar. You shall not, however, make me the credulous man you think of, Walter Baurchel, with all your contrivances.

Walt. And you don't believe us then?

Bar. Are you fool enough to imagine I do?

Walt. That were foolish enough, I grant you; for though an old lover has generally a strong vein of credulity about him, the current of his belief always sets one way, carrying withered nosegays, tattered billet-doux, broken posies, and all kinds of trumpery along with it at fifteen knots by the hour.

Bar. Walter Baurchel! Walter Baurchel! flesh and blood cannot endure the offensive virulence of thy tongue.

Dart. He is indeed too severe with you, Baron; but what he tells you of Hovelberg is, nevertheless, very true.

Bar. I'll believe neither of you: you are both hatching a story to deceive me.

[EXIT *in anger.*

Walt. (*shrugging his shoulders and casting up his eyes.*) What strong delusion we poor mortals may be blinded withal! That poor brother of mine believes, that the woman who refused to marry him when he was young and poor, yet smiles upon him, praises him, accepts presents from him when he is old and rich, must certainly entertain for him a most delicate, disinterested attachment; and you might as well overturn the walls of that castle with

one stroke of your foot, as beat this absurdity out of him.

Dart. But you are too violent : it will not be beat out ; it must be got out as it got in, with craft and discretion.

Walt. Then devil take me for attempting it ! for craft I have none, and discretion is a thing ——

Dart. You will never have any thing to do with, I believe.

Walt. What then is to be done ? If it were not that I cannot brook to see the conceited overbearing son of this Jezebel, carrying off the mistress of Antonio, I would even let the old fool sit under the tickling of her thievish fingers, and make as great a noodle of himself as he pleases. — But it must not be. — Fie upon it, Dartz ! thou hast a good head for invention, while I, heaven help me ! have only a good tongue for railing ; do thou contrive some plot or other to prevent the disgrace of thy friend.

Dart. Plots are not easily contrived.

Walt. I know this, else I should have tried it myself.

Dart. Are you well acquainted with the Count ?

Walt. I am but just come to the castle, where I have thrust myself in, though an unwelcome guest, to look after the interest of De Bertrand ; and should be glad to know something more of the man who has so much intoxicated the gay Livia. What kind of a being is he ?

Dart. It would puzzle me as much as the contriving of your plot to answer that question. There is nothing real in him. He is a mere package of pretences, poorly held together with sense and capacity enough, were it not for one defect in his nature, to make him all that he affects to be. He is a thing made up of seemings.

Walt. Made up of seemings !

Dart. Even so ; for what in other men is reckoned the sincerest part of their character, his very self-conceit, is assumed.

Walt. And what is the defect you hinted at ?

Dart. It has been whispered to me by an old school-fellow of his, that he is deplorably deficient in personal courage ; which accounts for his mother's having placed him in the regiment of a superannuated General, and also, for the many complaints he makes of the inactivity of his commander. It is a whisper I am inclined to credit ; and, if we must have a plot, it shall hinge upon this.

Walt. My dear fellow ! nothing can be better. Give it a turn or two in thy brains, and I'll warrant thou drawest it out again, shaped into an admirable plot. Direct all thyself, and I'll work under thee as a journeyman conspirator ; for, as I said before, I have a ready tongue, but a head of no invention.

Dart. We must speak of this another time. See who approaches.

Walt. Ha ! the man we are speaking of, and

the deluded Livia. By my faith he has a specious appearance ! and the young fool looks at him too, as she would not look at a worthier man, whose merit might be tarnished with a few grains of modesty.

Enter VALDEMERE and LIVIA, followed by JEANNETTE carrying a basket filled with flowers, &c.

Dart. (to Liv.) Permit me, Madam, to pay you my profound homage.

Liv. You are welcome here, Chevalier : what accident procures me this pleasure ? (*aside to Count.*) He'll make one more at our midnight revel in the grotto.

Vald. (*aside with some chagrin.*) Are there not enow of us ?

Dart. Being in this part of the country on military duty, I could not resist the pleasure of paying my respects at the castle : and I honestly confess I had a secondary motive for my visit, expecting to find amongst your guests, my old friend and school-fellow Antonio.

Liv. Baron de Bertrand, you mean. He was here yesterday, but I really forget whether he went away or remained in the evening. (*Affecting to yawn.*) Is he with us, or not, Count ?

Walt. (*aside to Dart.*) Meet me by-and-by in my chamber. My tongue is unruly, and I had better go while I can keep it between my teeth.

[EXIT.

Liv. Does not his amiable relation there, who steals from us so quietly, know where he is ?

Vald. If you are in quest of your friend, Chevalier, had you not better enquire at some of the peasants' houses in the neighbourhood ? There may be some beauty in the village, perhaps, whose august presence a timid man may venture to approach, particularly if her charms should be somewhat concealed behind the friendly flax of her distaff.

Dart. Pardon me, Count ; I thought my friend had aspired to a beauty, whose charms would have pleased him, indeed, behind the flax of a distaff, but will not, I trust, entirely intimidate him from the more brilliant situation in which fortune has placed them. Aye ; that glance in your eye, and that colour in your cheek, charming Livia, tell me, I am right.

Liv. They speak at random then ; for it would puzzle a much wiser head than I wear on my shoulders to say what are his pretensions. He visits me, it is true, but suddenly takes his leave again, and the very next day, perhaps, as suddenly returns.

Vald. Like poor puss with roasted chesnuts before her, who draws back her burnt paw every time she attempts them, but will not give up the attack. He may, however, after some more of those hasty visits, find courage for it at last.

Dart. There is one attack, however, for

which he never lacks courage, when the enemies of his country are before him.

Vald. True, he is brave in the field, but he is fortunate also. He serves under an active commander, while I waste my ardour in listless inactivity.

Dart. Cheer up then, noble Count, I have good news to tell you upon this score.

Vald. On this score ! Is any change to take place ? (*In a feeble voice.*)

Dart. (*after a pause.*) You are too well bred to be impatient for an answer.

Vald. O no ; you mistake me ; I am very impatient ; I am on fire to hear it.

Dart. Expand then your doughty breast at thoughts of the glorious fields that are before you : your old General is set aside, and the most enterprising man in the service, Count ——— himself is now your Commander. (*After a momentary pause, and eyeing him keenly.*) Silent joy, they say, is most sincere ; you are, I perceive, considerably and profoundly glad.

Vald. (*assuming suddenly great animation.*) O, immeasurably so. Great news indeed ! — Strange — I mean very admirable news, if one could be sure it were true.

Dart. True ! Who doubts what delights him ?

Vald. I thought the regiment was promised to another person ; I was not prepared to hear it.

Dart. So it appeared.

Vald. But I am delighted — I can't express it: — I am glad to a folly. Tol de rol — tol de rol —

(Singing and skipping about affectedly.)

Liv. Cruel creature! to sing at what, perhaps, will make others weep.

Vald. Weep! — No, I don't weep. I am happy to a folly, but I don't weep. *(Skipping about again.)* Tol lol de rol! — Plague take these stones! this ground is abominably rough.

Dart. Fie upon it! any ground is smooth enough for a happy man to skip upon.

Liv. You smile, Dartz; your news is of your own invention.

Dart. Not absolutely, Madam; there was such a rumonr.

Vald. *(eagerly.)* A rumour! only a rumour! Why did you say it was true?

Dart. To give you a moment's pleasure, Valdemere. If you have enjoyed it, you are a gainer; and the disappointment, I hope, will not break your heart.

Vald. It is cruel indeed. But who can feel disappointment in this fair presence? *(Bowing to Liv.)* Let us go to the grotto, charming Livia; we waste our time here with folly. — Give me thy basket, child, *(to Jean.)* I'll dispose of every chaplet it contains to admiration. I'll hang them all up with mine own hand.

Liv. Don't be so very active: you positively shan't follow me to the grotto: I told you so before.

Vald. Positive is a word of no positive meaning when it enforces what we dislike. However, since you forbid it, I will not *follow* you; I'll go by your side, which is far better, and support your fair hand on my arm. (*Putting Livia's arm in his with conceited confidence.*)

Liv. What a sophistical explanation of my words! a heretical theologian is a joke to you.

Vald. (*casting a triumphant look behind him to Dartz, as he leads her off.*) Good morning, Chevalier, you go in quest of your friend, I suppose. Pray tell him to take courage, and be less diffident of his own good parts, and he may at last be promoted, perhaps, to the good graces of his Quarter-master's daughter.

Dart. Nobody at least, who sees Count Valdemere in his present situation, will think of recommending modesty to him.

[*EXEUNT Vald. and Liv. followed by Jean.*]

Dart. Impudent puppy! his triumph shall be short. Blind woman! are flattery and impudence so necessary in gaining your favour, that all other qualities, without them, are annihilated? He shall this very night pay dearly for his presumption.

[*EXIT.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Castle. Enter WALTER BAURCHEL and DARTZ, by opposite sides.*

Walt. Ha! my good friend, punctual to a wish. You have got your head stored, I hope, with a good plot.

Dart. I am at least more in the humour for it than I was. I have found his conceit and arrogance more intolerable than I imagined. I have touched him in the weak part too, and find him vulnerable.

Walt. Well, but the plot.

Dart. I have discovered also a trait of villainy in him, that would prick me on to the charge, were I sluggish as a tortoise.

Walt. So much the better. Now for the plot.

Dart. As I passed just now through the little green copse near the postern, a beautiful girl crossed my way, and in tears.

Walt. Tut! she has crossed thy wits too.

Dart. Have patience! she'll be useful. — I questioned her gently.

Walt. Aye, gently enough I doubt not.

Dart. And find she is sister to that shrewd little fellow, the Count's page: that her affections have been gained and betrayed by Valdemere; and she is now hovering about the castle,

for an opportunity of upbraiding him, or in the vain hope, perhaps, of moving his pity.

Walt. She has moved thy pity at least ; what has all this to do with our plot ?

Dart. A great deal : I am telling you before hand what we shall have to work upon : a plot cannot, any more than a coat, be made without materials.

Walt. Well, but shew me thy pattern first, and talk of the buttons and buckram afterwards.

Dart. Be it so then, since you are so impatient. There is a friend of mine stationed about a league hence with his regiment ; where he is to wait till he is joined by another detachment of the army, as the enemy, it is feared, may penetrate to these parts, and overrun the country. I mean to go to him immediately ; make him privy to our design, and engage him to send a party of his soldiers to make a sham attack upon the castle at midnight, when we shall all be assembled at this fanciful banquet in the grotto.

Walt. (*nodding his head.*) Good.

Dart. Valdemere then, as the gallant soldier he affects to be, and the favoured admirer too of the lady, must of course take upon himself the defence of her castle.

Walt. (*nodding again.*) Very good.

Dart. This will quell his presumption, I trust ; and expose him to Livia for the very paltry being that he is.

Walt. Aye, so far good; you'll make some furtherance to the plot out of this.

Dart. Some furtherance to the plot! Why this is the plot itself.

Walt. The plot itself! Any simple man in the country might have devised as much as this comes to.

Dart. It does not please you then because it is not intricate. But don't despise it entirely; though the outline is simple, tricks and contrivances to work up the mind of our victim to the state that is suited to our purpose, will enrich it as we proceed; and the Page I have mentioned, provoked by the wrongs of his sister, will be our subtle and diligent agent. Nay, should we draw Valdemere into great disgrace, we may bribe him, by concealing his dishonour, to marry the poor girl he has wronged.

Walt. Ha! this indeed is something like a plot.—And Antonio's marriage with Livia, how is that to be fastened to the end of it?

Dart. Nay, I have no certain hook, I confess, to hang that upon. It must depend on the Baron; for unless he declare Antonio his heir, he will never venture to propose himself as a match for the well-dowried Livia. But we shall manage matters ill, if we cannot draw the Baron into our scheme.

Walt. Then a fig for your plot! It is as bare of invention as the palm of my hand.

Dart. This is always the case with those who lack invention themselves: they are never

pleased with that of any other person, if it be not bristled over with contrivances like a hedgehog. And I must be allowed to say, Mr. Walter Baurchel, that he who racks his brains for your service, works for a thankless master.

Walt. He works for an honest one, then.

Dart. Away with the honesty that cannot afford a few civil words to a friend, who is doing his best to oblige you! As much duplicity as this amounts to, would not much contaminate your virtue.

Walt. Well, well, I am wrong, perhaps, but thou art as testy as myself.

Dart. Because I won't bear your untoward humour. Some people find every body testy who approaches them, and marvel at their own bad luck.—But no more of this: let us think of our friend. Does the Baron believe what you told him of Hovelberg's appointment with the Countess?

Walt. He makes a show of not believing it, but I think he has his own suspicions at bottom; for his valet tells me, he has sent to desire Hovelberg to speak with him as soon as he arrives.

Dart. Here comes De Bertrand; I hear his steps.

Walt. Is he returned to the castle?

Dart. Yes; I forgot to tell you so, you were in such a hurry for your plot,

Walt. Silly fellow! he cannot stay away from his capricious mistress, though the first glance of her eye sinks him to a poltron at once.

Enter ANTONIO.

Ant. (to Walt.) Good morning, gentle Kinsman ; — but methinks you are not very glad to see me ; these are not looks of welcome.

Walt. Thou art one of those that trouble me.

Ant. I am of a pretty numerous class of beings then, from the kitten that gnaws at your shoe-string, to the Baron, who spoils your best pen in writing love-verses to his mistress.

Walt. Well ; and they would torment any man. Love-verses ! with such an old painted hypocrite for the object of them !

Ant. His first love, you know ; his Delia.

Walt. His Delia ! His delusion. Is there such a thing as witchcraft in the world ? I believe in good earnest there is. Her dominion over him is a mystery : a more than Egyptian blindness.

Ant. Nay, you have yourself in a good degree to blame for it, my good Sir. Had you encouraged his humour, harmless as it is ; bestowing some praise on his verses, and less abuse on the too youthful cut of his peruke, she could never have taken possession of him as she has done.

Walt. Praise his verses, and not abuse his peruke ! it had been beyond the self-denial of a saint.

Dart. And had you —

Walt. (to Dart.) One assailant at a time, if you please.

Dart. Excuse me, Sir ; I must needs say, had you even paid a little attention to the Countess herself, when she first renewed her intimacy with the Baron, she would have been less anxious, perhaps, to estrange him from his old friends.

Walt. Attention to her ! I could not have done it to gain myself, like Mahomet, the entrance to the seventh heaven. I must tell people plainly what I think of them, though I should hang for it.

Dart. Had you said starve for it, you had named the fate that more commonly attends plain speaking.

Ant. And in telling people disagreeable truths to gratify your own humour too, are you surprised, my good Sir, that they should not be edified thereby ?

Walt. (to *Ant.*) What, young Soldier, you are become a plain speaker too.

Ant. Just to shew you, Sir, how agreeable it is.

Walt. Ha, ha, ha ! Well ; thou hast the better of me now. Would thou could'st prate as briskly to thy mistress ! that would do more for thee in one hour than all thy bashful tenderness in a year.

Ant. I might — I should indeed — I defend not my weakness. — You promised on this point to spare me.

Walt. Aye, the very sound of her name quells

thy spirit, and makes thee hesitate and stammer like a culprit. It is provoking.

Dart. You profess a violent detestation of conceit, my shrewd Sir; where, then, is your indulgence for modesty?

Walt. You mistake the matter, Dartz. Your friend there, has as good a conceit of himself as any man: he is not modest, but bashful; a weakness too that only besets him in the presence of his mistress. By this good fist of mine! it provokes me almost to the cudgelling of such an unaccountable ninny. But I would cudgel thee, and serve thee too, De Bertrand. Take courage; we have a plot in our heads to make a man of thee at last.

Dart. (*aside, pulling Walt. by the sleeve.*) Say not a word of the plot: his sense of honour is so delicate, he would recoil at it.

Ant. A plot did you say?

Walt. Aye, a kind of a plot; — that is to say — What kind of a plot is it, Dartz?

Dart. Have you forgot your own scheme for cheating the virtuoso, when your cabinet of antiquities comes to the hammer?

Walt. By my fay! this memory of mine is not worth a pinch of tobacco. (*Seeing Ant. look at his watch.*) Art thou going any where?

Ant. No; — I did think — I believe I shall take a turn on the terrace.

Dart. (*to Ant.*) I understand you: take a turn in the cabinet of paintings rather; that will suit your purpose better.

Ant. May I presume to go there ?

Walt. Presume, simpleton ! That impudent puppy of a Count lords it in her dressing-room. Go thy ways ! (*pushing him off the stage with slight anger.* EXIT Antonio.) That fellow provokes me ; yet there is something in him that goes so near my heart : he is more akin to me than his blood entitles him to be : he is like a part of myself.

Dart. Not the least like it. Now that you have taught us to speak plainly, I must needs say, were he at all like yourself, you would disinherit him in the course of a month.

Walt. You are right, perhaps. But, alas ! he would not be much the poorer for being disinherited by me. O that old fool of a brother ! I could flog him for his poetry.

Dart. Have patience, and we may find a better way of dealing with him. If we could persuade him to disguise himself like a diamond merchant, and accompany Hovelberg when he visits the Countess, he would be convinced of the true nature of her regard for him.

Walt. An excellent thought ! This is just what was wanting to make our plot really like a plot.

Dart. I'm glad it pleases you at last. Before I leave the castle to negotiate with my friend for his myrmidons, I'll find out the Baron, and endeavour to persuade him.

Walt. Heaven prosper thee ! but return, ere thou goest, and let me know the result.

Dart. Depend upon it.

[*EXEUNT severally.*]

SCENE II.

A Room hung with Paintings, and enriched with Carving and Ornaments, &c. Enter VALDEMERE and ANTONIO.

Vald. Here are some good paintings, De Bertrand ; if you have any taste for the art, they will please you. This Guido on the left is a divine thing. The Magdalen in Count Orrinberg's collection was considered as superior to it ; but I always maintained this to be the best painting of the two, and the world have at last adopted my opinion. I have always decidedly thought — but you are not looking at it. Is there any thing in that door to arrest your attention ? The carving on it is but indifferent.

Ant. I thought I heard footsteps. She's coming.

Vald. Pooh ! she won't be here this half hour ; so you need not yet take alarm, as if an enemy were advancing upon you.

Ant. You connect the idea of alarm with an enemy ; would I had firmness to face what I love ! You are a happy man, Valdemere, and a bold one too, most assuredly : what would not I give for a little of your happy self-possession.

Vald. Aye, it is an article of some value : he who can't possess himself, must not expect to possess his mistress.

Ant. A very specious maxim this from a young fellow's mouth, with the manliness of well-curled whiskers to support it : yet I have seen the embarrassment of a diffident character plead its own cause more effectually than the eloquence of a brazen-browed barrister. At least I have always felt it have more power over me.

Val. That is natural enough : it is a common selfish sympathy : one thief pities another when the rope is round his neck. Feeling for others is the consequence of our own imperfections ; this is a known truth.

Ant. Establish it if you can, Valdemere, for it will go well nigh to prove you immaculate.

Vald. How far soever I may be from that degree of perfection, jealousy at least is not one of my faults, since I have introduced a rival into the apartments of my mistress, where he had not the courage to venture alone, and am also pointing out to him what he has not discovered for himself, that her picture is now before his eyes.

(*Pointing to a picture.*)

Ant. (*looking up to it eagerly.*) It is somewhat like.

Vald. She sat for it at my request : no one else could prevail on her. The painter knew my taste in these matters, and has taken wonderful pains with it.

Ant. (*sighing.*) You have indeed been honoured.

Vald. He has made the eyes to look upon you with such expression.

Ant. Think you so? To me he appears to have failed in this respect; or perhaps it is because any semblance of eyes which I can thus stedfastly look upon, are not to me the eyes of Livia.

Vald. I did not suspect you of being so fastidious.

Ant. Not so neither: but had they been turned on some other object instead of the spectator, one should then have seen them as one is accustomed to see them.

Vald. Yes, speaking for your single self, this may be true. I beg leave to dissent.

Ant. Yet surely you will agree, that the direct thrilling glance, from eyes of such vivid expression, cannot possibly be imitated, and ought not by a skilful painter to be attempted.

Enter LIVIA behind them.

Vald. Perhaps you are right: you talk like a connoisseur on the subject.

Liv. I come in good time then; for connoisseur or not, to hear De Bertrand talk at all is a very lucky adventure. You have wronged us much, Baron, to keep us so long ignorant of your taste for the fine arts.

Ant. (*embarrassed.*) Madam, I am much honoured. I am very little — (*mumbling words in a confused way that are not heard.*) I am very much obliged to you.

Liv. You are grateful for slight obligations. But you are looking at my picture I see, which was painted two years ago at the request of a

good old uncle of mine ; pray give me your opinion of it.

Ant. It appears — it is very charming. It is — that is, I suppose, it is very finely painted.

Liv. It is reckoned so : and it certainly does more than justice to the original. (*Ant. hesitates as if he would speak, but remains silent.*) You are of my opinion, I perceive, or at least too well bred to contradict me. Confess it freely ; you are of my opinion.

Ant. O entirely, Madam.

Liv. You flatter me exceedingly.

Ant. I meant it in simple sincerity.

Liv. O, sincere enough I doubt not.

Vald. And surely you will not question its simplicity.

Liv. (*to Vald., turning from Ant. with pity and contempt*) Don't let us be too hard upon him. Pray look at that picture of my great aunt, who was a celebrated beauty.

Vald. (*gazing with affected admiration at Livia's picture.*) I have no eyes for any other beauty than what I now gaze upon.

Liv. And do you indeed admire this picture so much ?

Vald. The faintest resemblance of its fair original is fascinating. Yet, methinks, the painter should have represented it as looking on some other object than the spectator.

Liv. Why so ?

Vald. The direct thrilling glance, from eyes of such vivid expression, cannot possibly be imitated, and ought not to have been attempted.

Ant. (aside.) My own words in the coxcomb's mouth !

Liv. This is an objection proceeding from genuine sensibility: yet you never mentioned it before.

Vald. Perhaps I am too fastidious; but any eyes that I can thus stedfastly look upon, are not to me the eyes of Livia.

Liv. Ah! these are in truth the words of a too partial friend.

Vald. Words from the heart, divine Livia, will tell from whence they came. (*They both walk to the bottom of the stage, speaking in dumb-show, while Ant. remains in the front.*)

Ant. (aside.) With my own words he woos her, and before my face too: matchless impudence! — And such a man as this pleases Livia! — He whispers in her ear, and she smiles. — My heart sickens at it: I'll look no more, lest I become envious and revengeful, and hateful to myself. — O Nature! hast thou made me of such poor stuff as this?

Vald. (turning round from the bottom of the stage.) Ha! De Bertrand, are you declaiming? Some speech of a tragedy, I suppose, from the vehemence of your gesture. Pray let Livia hear you: she is partial, you know, to every thing you do, and finds every exhibition you make before her particularly amusing.

Ant. (sternly.) Come nearer to me, Sir; the first part of my speech is for your private ear. — Come nearer.

Liv. Pray go to him: by the tone of his voice he personates some tyrant, and must be obeyed.

Ant. Yes, Sir, I must be obeyed. (*Vald. shuffles up to him unwillingly, and Ant. speaks in his ear.*) Take no more impertinent liberties with me in this Lady's presence, or be prepared to justify them elsewhere. [EXIT, looking at

Vald. sternly, who remains silent.

Liv. (*advancing to the front.*) What is the matter, Count?

Vald. Nothing — nothing at all.

Liv. Nay, something unpleasant has passed between you.

Vald. I believe I did wrong : I should have treated him more gently. But the strangeness of his behaviour obliged me to use threatening words, upon which he withdrew, and chose not to understand them.

Liv. How ill one judges then by dumb-shew of what passes at a distance.

Vald. I am always calm on these occasions, while he assumes the fierceness of a boaster.

Liv. But you will not call him out for such a trifle?

Vald. Not for the world, divine creature, if it give you uneasiness.

Liv. How gentle you are ! The brave are always so.

Vald. How can I be otherwise with such an angel to prompt me ? No, the braggard may live in safety for me ; I will not harm one hair of his head.

Liv. I thank you, dear Valdemere ! and now, to recompense your goodness, I'll shew the beautiful gem I promised you : follow me.

Vald. Yes, bewitching maid ! to the world's end, to the bottom of the ocean, to the cannon's brazen mouth, I would follow thee. [EXEUNT.

SCENE III.

The Countess's Dressing-room. She enters from an inner Chamber, with a small Shagreen Case in her hand, followed by JEANETTA, carrying a Casket, which she sets upon a Table.

Countess. Jeanetta, let me take a last look of those dear things before I part with them for ever.

Jean. I'm sure, my Lady, they are so handsome, and you look so handsome when you wear them, it would go to my heart to part with them.

Countess. But my dear boy must have money, Jeanetta, and I have been expensive myself. (*Opens the casket, and looks at the jewels.*) My diamonds, my pearls, my rubies, my darlings ! for the sake of a still greater darling I must part with you all.

Jean. But if I might presume to speak, my Lady, don't you indulge the young Count too much in extravagance ?

Countess. O no, Jeanetta ; I doat upon him : it is this amiable weakness of character which all the world remarks and admires in me. And he loves me entirely too ; he would sacrifice his life for my sake.

Jean. He'll sacrifice nothing else, however ; for he never gives up the smallest convenience of his own to oblige you.

Countess. Small things are of no consequence : he would give up for me, I am confident, the

thing most dear to his heart : and for him — to see him lord of this castle and its domains, and occupying in society the brilliant place that becomes him, I would — what would I not sacrifice !

Jean. Were he to live on the fortune he has, and marry where he is attached, he might perhaps be happier.

Countess. Happier ! Were he mean enough to be happy so — contemptible thought ! — I would see him in his grave rather. But no more of this : have you seen Hovelberg ? You say he is waiting below.

Jean. Yes, Madam, and a friend with him ; an Armenian Jew-merchant, who will, he says, go halves in his purchases, and enable him to give you a better price for the jewels, as he is himself rather low in cash at present.

Countess. Well, I'll object to neither Jew nor Infidel that puts money into my pocket. (*Holding up a ruby necklace.*) This should fetch something considerable.

Jean. O la, Madam ! you won't part with that surely ; your neck is like alabaster under it. Did you but know how they admired you at Prince Dormach's the last time you wore it. — I would sell the very gown from my back ere I parted with it.

Countess. So they admired me at Prince Dormach's then ?

Jean. O dear, my Lady ! the Prince's valet told me, though two young beauties from

Brussels were there, nobody spoke of any one but you.

Countess. Well, to please thee then, I'll keep it.

Jean. La! here is a little emerald ring, my Lady; those brokers will despise such a trifle, and give you a mere nothing for it. — La! who would think it? it fits my finger to a hair. It must be a mort too large for your delicate hand.

Countess. Keep it for thyself, then, since it fits thee. He was a great fool who gave it me, and had it made of that awkward size.

Jean. I thank you, my Lady: I wish you would give me every thing in this precious casket that has not been the gift of a sage.

Countess. Thou art right, child. It would put many a hundred louis-d'ors into thy pocket, and leave scarcely a marvedi for myself. A rich Knight of Malta gave me these (*holding up a string of pearls,*) whose bandy legs were tricked out most delicately in fine-clocked hose of the nicest and richest embroidery. Rest his soul! I made as much of those legs as the hosier did.

Jean. I doubt it not, Madam, and deserved what you earned full as well.

Countess. (*looking again at her pearls.*) There is not a flaw in any one of them.

Jean. Aye, commend me to such legs! had they been straighter, the pearls had been worse.

Countess. This amber box with brilliants I had from an old croaking Marquis, who pestered

every music room in the principality to the day of his death, with notes that would have frightened a peacock. As long as he sang, poor man ! I considered myself as having a salary on the musical establishment at the rate of two hundred ducats per month.

Jean. Aye ; God send that all the old Marquises in these parts would croak for us at this rate.

Countess. I have no reason to complain : my present friend bleeds as freely as any of his predecessors.

Jean. So he should, my lady. Such nonsense as he writes ought not to be praised for a trifle. I would not do it, I'm sure.

Countess. Dost thou ever praise then for profit ?

Jean. To be honest with you, Madam, I have done it, as who has not ? But never since I entered your Ladyship's service ; for why should you reward me for praising you, when all the world does it for nothing ? — No, no, my Lady ; you are too wise for that.

Countess. There is somebody at the door.

Jean. It is Hovelberg.

Countess. Open then, but let nobody else in.

(*Jean. opens the door, and Hovelberg enters, followed by Baron Baurchel, disguised as an Armenian Jew.*)

Countess. I am happy to see you, dear Hovelberg ; and this gentleman also, (*curtesying to the Bar.*) I know it is only a friend. whom we

may trust, that you would introduce to me on the present occasion.

Hov. To be sure, Madam : a friend we may depend on. (*Drawing Countess aside, and speaking in her ear.*) A man of few words : better to do in this quarter than this. (*Pointing first to his pocket, and then to his head.*) And that is a good man, you know, to be well with.

Countess. O the best stuff in the world for making a friend of. (*Returning to the Bar.*) Sir, I have the highest regard and esteem for you.

Bar. (*in a feigned voice.*) On vatch account, Madam ?

Countess. O good Sir ! on every account.

Bar. You lov'sh not my religion ?

Countess. I respect and reverence it profoundly.

Bar. You lov'sh not my pershon ?

Countess. It is interesting and engaging, most assuredly.

Bar. No body telsh me sho before !

Countess. Because the world is full of envious people, who will not tell you truths that are agreeable.

Bar. (*nodding assent.*) Now I understant.

Countess. Yes, dear Sir ; you must do so ; your understanding is unquestionable. (*Looking archly to Hovel.*) And now, gentlemen, do me the honour to be seated, and examine these jewels attentively.

Hov. We would rather stand if you'll permit us.

Countess. (*aside to Hovel., while the Baron examines the jewels.*) My dear Hovelberg, be liberal : for the sum I want is a large one, and those jewels would procure it for me any where ; only, regarding you as my friend, I give you the first offer. — But your friend, methinks, examines every thing with great curiosity.

Hov. Yes, poor man ! he likes to appear as knowing as he can : this is but natural, you know, when one is deficient in the upper department. — But he'll pay like a prince, if you flatter and amuse him.

Bar. Vasht fine stones ! Vasht pretty ornaments ! (*To Countess.*) You dishposhe of all deshe ?

Countess. Yes, every thing.

Bar. Dere be gifsh here, no doubt, from de dear friensh.

Hov. Or some favoured lover, perhaps.

Countess. (*sighing affectedly.*) Perhaps so ; but I must part with them all.

Bar. (*aside to Hov.*) Nay, she has some tenderness for me : put her not to too severe a trial.

Hov. (*aside.*) We shall see.

Bar. (*returning to Countess.*) You be woman ; and all womansh have de affections for some one lover or frient.

Countess. O how good and amiable and considerate you are ! I have indeed a heart formed for tenderness.

Bar. (*drawing Hovel. aside again.*) She does love me, Hovelberg ; tempt her not with an extravagant price for the picture.

Hov. (*aside.*) I'll take a better way of managing it. (*Returning to the Countess.*) My friend desires me to say, Madam, that, if there is any thing here you particularly value, he'll advance you money upon it, which you may repay at your leisure, and you shall preserve it.

Countess. (*to Baron.*) How generous you are, my dear Sir ! Yes ; there is one thing I would keep.

Bar. (*eagerly.*) One ting — dere be one ting : tish picture, perhaps.

Countess. This ruby necklace.

Bar. You sell tish picture, den ?

Countess. To be sure, if you'll purchase it.

Hov. The diamonds are valuable, indeed ; but you will not sell the painting ?

Countess. That will depend on the price you offer for it.

Hov. Being a portrait, it is of no value at all, but to those who have a regard for the original.

Jean. And what part of the world do they live in, Mr. Hovelberg ? Can you find them out any where ?

Countess. Nay, peace, Jeanetta. — As a portrait, indeed, it is of no value to any body, but, as a characteristic old head, it should fetch a good price. (*Shewing it to Baron.*) Observe, my dear Sir, that air of conceit and absurdity

over the whole figure : to those who have a taste for the whimsical and ridiculous, it would be invaluable. Don't you perceive it ?

Bar. Not very sure.

Countess. Not sure ! Look at it again. See how the eyes are turned languishingly aside, as if he were repeating, " Dear gentle idol of a heart too fond." (*Mimicking the Baron's natural voice.*)

Hov. Ha, ha, ha ! Your mimickry is excellent, Countess. Is it not, Friend Johnadab ?

Bar. O, vasht comical.

Hov. (*aside to him.*) She has a good talent.

Bar. (*aside.*) Shrewd witch ! The words of my last sonnet, indeed ; but I did not repeat them so.

Hov. (*aloud.*) Though you are an admirable mimick, Madam, my Friend Johnadab does not think your imitation of the Baron entirely correct.

Countess. (*alarmed.*) He knows the Baron then ; I have been very imprudent. — But pray don't suppose I meant any disrespect to the worthy Baron, whom I esteem very much.

Bar. O vasht much !

Hov. Be not uneasy, Madam ; my friend will be secret, and loves a joke mightily.

Countess. I'll trust, then, to his honour : and since he does not like my imitation of the Baron, he shall have it from one who does it better than I. Jeanetta, amuse this worthy gentleman by repeating the Baron's last sonnet.

Jean. Nay, my Lady, you make me do it so often, I'm tired of taking him off.

Countess. Do as you are bid, child.

Jean. " Dear gentle idol of a heart too fond,
" Why doth that eye of sweetest sympathy ——"

Hov. Ha, ha, ha ! Excellent !

Bar. (*off his guard.*) By Heaven, this is too bad ! Your servants taught to turn me into ridicule !

Countess. (*starting.*) How's this ? Mercy on me !

Hov. Be not alarmed, Countess ; I thought he would surprise you. My friend is the best mimick in Europe.

Countess. I can scarcely recover my surprise. (*To Baron*) My dear Sir, I cannot praise you enough. You have a wonderful talent. The Baron's own mouth could not utter his voice more perfectly than yours.

Bar. (*pulling off his cap and beard.*) No, Madam, not easily. (*Jean. shrieks out, and the Countess stands in stupid amazement.*) This disguise, Madam, has procured for me a specimen of the amiable dispositions of a heart formed for tenderness, with a sample of your talents for mimickry into the bargain ; and so I wish you good day, with thanks for my morning's amusement.

Countess. (*recovering herself.*) Ha, ha, ha ! You understand mumming very well, Baron, but I still better. I acted my part well.

Bar. Better than well, Madam : it was the counter-part of my enacting the Baron.

Jean. Indeed, dear Baron, the Countess knew it was you, and so did I too. Indeed, indeed, we did. I'm sure it is a very good joke : I wonder we don't laugh more at it than we do.

Bar. Be quiet, subordinate imp of this arch tempter ! My thralldom is at an end ; and all the jewels in that shameful heap were not too great a price for such emancipation. (*Bowing very low to Countess.*) Adieu ! most amiable, most sentimental, most disinterested of women ! [EXIT.

Countess. Hovelberg, you have betrayed me.

Hov. How so, Madam ? You told me yourself you were the most sincere woman in the world ; the Baron doubted your regard for him ; how could I then dissuade him from putting it to the proof, unless I had doubted your word, Madam ? an insult you could never have pardoned.

Countess. What, you laugh at me, too, you villian ! (EXIT Hovel.) Oh ! I am ruined, derided, and betrayed ! (*Throws herself into a chair, covering her face with her hand, while Jeanetta endeavours to comfort her.*)

Jean. Be not so cast down, my Lady, there are more than one rich fool in the world, and you have a good knack at finding them out.

Countess. O, that I should have been so unguarded ! That I should never have suspected !

Jean. Aye, with his vasht this, and his vasht that : it was, as he said, vasht comical that we did not.

Countess. Bring not his detested words again to my ears ; I can't endure the sound of them.

Enter VALDEMERE.

Vald. Well, Madam, you can answer my demands now, I hope : Hovelberg has been with you. Money, money, my dear mother ! (*Holding out his hand.*) There is a fair broad palm to receive it ; and here (*kissing her hand coaxingly.*) is a sweet little hand to bestow it.

Countess. (*pushing him away sternly.*) Thy inconsiderate prodigality has been most disastrous. Had'st thou been less thoughtless, less profuse — a small portion of prudence and economy would have made us independent of every dotard's humour.

Vald. Notable virtues indeed, Madam ; but where was I to learn them, pray ? Did you ever before recommend them to me, by either precept or example ? Prudence ! Economy ! What has befallen you ? I'm sure there is something wrong when such words come from your lips. — Ha ! in tears, too ! Hovelberg has brought no money then ?

Countess. No, no, barbarian ! He has ruined me.

Vald. How so ?

Countess. I cannot tell thee : it would suffocate me.

Jean. La, Count! My Lady may well call him barbarian. He brought the old Baron with him to purchase the jewels, disguised like an Armenian Jew; and when bargaining with her for his own picture, my Lady said something of the original not much to his liking, and so the old fool tore off his disguise, and bounced out of the room in a great passion.

Vald. By my faith, this is unlucky! I depended on touching 500 louis d'ors immediately.

Countess. Thinking only of yourself still, when you may well guess how I am distressed.—I shall never again find such a liberal old cully as he.

Vald. Yes, you will, mother: more readily than I shall find the 500 louis.—I owe half that sum to Count Pugstoft, for losses at the billiard table; all the velvet and embroidery, the defunct suits of two passing years, haunt me wherever I go, in the form of unmannerly taylors: and, besides all this, there is a sweet pretty Arabian in the stables of Huckston, my jockey, that I am dying to be master of.—By my faith, it is very hard! Had you no suspicion? How came you to be so much off your guard?

Countess. I believe it was fated to be so, and therefore I was blinded for the moment. I dreamt last night that I had but one tooth in my head, and it dropped on the ground at my feet. This, it is said, betokens the loss of a friend by death, and I trembled for thee, my child; but

now, too surely, my dream is explained and accomplished.

Vald. And, methinks, you would have preferred the first interpretation.

Countess. Ah ! ungrateful boy ! You know too well how I have doated on you.

Vald. I do know too well : it has done me little good, I fear.

Countess. It has done me little good, I'm sure, since this is all the gratitude thou hast. I should never, but for thee, have become the flatterer of those I despise, to amass those odious jewels.

Vald. Ha ! the jewels are still here then ! I shall have my louis' still. Thank you, dear mother, that you did not part with them, at least. (*Kissing her hand hastily, and running to the table.*) I'll soon dispose of them all.

Countess. (*running after him.*) No, no ! not so fast, Valdemere : thou wilt not take them all. Haste thee, Jeanetta, and save some of them.

(*They all scramble round the table for the jewels, and the scene closes.*)

ACT III.

Scene before the Gate of the Castle. Enter NINA, who crosses the Stage timidly, stopping once or twice, and then with hesitation giving a gentle knock at the Gate. Enter Porter from the Gate, which he opens.

Porter. (*after waiting to hear her speak.*)

WHAT do you want, young woman? Did you only knock for amusement?

Nin. No, Sir; Is Count Valdemere in the castle? I would speak with him, if he is at leisure.

Port. He is in the castle; but as to speaking with him, no man of less consequence than his valet can answer that question.

Enter LORIMORE, by the opposite side.

Here he is. You come opportunely, Mr. Lorimore; this young person would speak with your master.

Lor. (aside.) O, Nina, I see. (*aloud.*) How do you do, my pretty Nina? You can't speak with my master, indeed; but you may speak with the next most agreeable personage in these parts, my master's man, as long as you please; and that, be assured, is a far better thing for your purpose, my princess.

Nin. Dare you insult me? You durst not once have done it. — I do not ask then to see him ; but give him this letter.

Lor. (*taking the letter.*) Do you wish this precious piece to be read, child, or to be burnt?

Nin. Why ask that? to be read, certainly.

Lor. I must not give it to the Count, then, but keep it to myself : and if you'll just allow me to make the slight alteration of putting Lormore the valet for Valdemere the master, as I read, it will be a very pretty, reasonable letter, and one that may advance your honour withal.

Nin. Audacious coxcomb! Give it me again. (*Snatches the letter from him, and turns away.*)

Lor. She is as proud as that little devil of a page, her brother.

Enter Page behind from the gate.

Page. The more devil he be, the fitter company for you. Whom spoke you to? (*seeing Nina*) Oh, oh! Is Nina here? — Nina, Nina, (*Running after her.*)

Nin. (*returning.*) My dear Theodore, is it thee? I did not ask for thee, lest thou should'st chide me for coming to the castle.

Page. I won't chide, but I'm sorry to see thee here. Fie, woman! thou art the daughter of as brave an officer, though a poor one, as any in the service ; art thou not ashamed to come, thus meanly, after a lover who despises thee?

Nin. He promised to marry me.

Page. He promised a fiddle-stick ! Poor deluded simpleton !

Nin. Ah ! dost thou chide me, boy as thou art ?

Page. Who is there to chide thee now, when both our parents are dead ? But as they would have done, so do I, sister ; I chide thee, and love thee too. — Go now ; return to the good woman from whose house thou hast stolen away, and I'll buy thee a new gown as soon as my quarter's salary is paid me.

Nin. Silly child, what care I for a new gown ? But if thou hast any pity for me, give this letter to thy master.

Page. I will, I will : but go thy ways now ; there is a gentleman coming. And do, dear Nina, return no more to the castle till I send thee word. Good be with thee, poor simpleton !

[EXIT Nina, and enter Dartz by the opposite side.]

Dart. Is it thy sister thou hast parted from ? I met her in the wood this morning ! she need not avoid me now.

Page. Let her go, Sir ; the farther she is from the castle the better.

Dart. Thou hast a letter in thy hand.

Page. Yes, Sir.

Dart. Which thou art to give to the Count.

Page. No, Sir ; I'll see him choked first.

(*Tearing the letter.*)

Dart. Nay, see what it contains ere thou destroyest it.

Page. (*putting it together again and reading it.*) Only upbraiding his unkindness, and stuff of that sort, with some nonsense about a dream she has had, which makes her afraid she shall never see him again.

Dart. Let me look. (*After reading it.*) This letter may be useful. Come with me, my little friend ; and we'll devise a way of revenging thy sister on her cruel seducer.

Page. Will you ? I'll worship you like a saint of the calendar, if you do this.

Dart. (*considering.*) Is not your master somewhat superstitious ?

Page. Marry is he ! but mightily afraid to be thought so. He laughed at me, — when the bad fever prevailed, — for wearing a charm on my breast against infection ! but the very next night when he went to bed, what should drop out, think you, as he opened his vest, but the very same charm, which he had procured immediately, and worn with such secrecy, that even valet Lorimore knew nothing of the matter.

Dart. This is good ; come with me, and I'll instruct thee what to do with thy letter.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

VALDEMERE'S Dressing-Room: Enter Page treading softly on tiptoe, and looking about the Room.

Page. Aye; the coast is clear, and the door of his chamber is a-jar; now is my time. (*Pulling the torn letter from his pocket, and stamping on the floor as he raises his voice.*) There, cursed letter, I'll make an end of thee! Give thee to my master, indeed! I'll give thee to the devil first. (*pretending to tear the letter, and strew the pieces about, while Valdemere, looking from the door of his chamber, steals behind him, and seizes his hands with the remainder of the letter in them.*) Mercy on me! is it you, my Lord?

Vald. What art thou doing? What scares thee so? What letter is this? Let me see it.

Page. O no, my Lord! I beseech you, for your own sake, don't read it.

Vald. Why should not I read it, boy?

Page. Lud, I don't know! you may not mind it, perhaps; but were any body to send such a letter to me, I should be mainly terrified. To be sure, death comes, as they say, at his own time, and we can't keep him away, though we should hang ourselves; but one don't like to be told before-hand the very year or day we are to die, neither.

Vald. The year and day! give me the letter: give it me immediately. (*Snatching the frag-*

ments of the letter from him, and picking up a piece or two from the floor, which he puts together hastily on a table near the front of the stage.) I can't make it piece any way.

Page. So much the better, my Lord : don't try to do it.

Vald. It is Nina's hand, I see, but I can make no sense of it. — Aye, now it will do, (*reading*) “I have been terrified with a dream, and fear I shall see you no more.” But where is the dream ; it is torn off ; give it me.

Page. I have it not.

Vald. Thou liest ! give it me, I say.

Page. Lud have mercy ! as I tore it off just now, your black spaniel ran away it.

Vald. No, varlet ! that is a sham ; go find it ; thou knowest where it is well enough.

Page. Indeed, my Lord, if it is not in the black spaniel's custody, it is no where else that I know of.

Vald. (*reading again.*) I fear I shall see you no more ! But it may be her own death as well as mine, that her dream has foretold ; and therefore she may see me no more.

Page. Very true, you had better think so ; though it does not often happen that a woman is killed at a siege.

Vald. At a siege !

Page. Pest take this hasty tongue of mine ; I could bite it off for the tricks it plays me.

Vald. At a siege !

Page. O, never mind it, Sir. It may be some

lie after all : some wicked invention to make you afraid.

Vald. (sternly.) What sayest thou ?

Page. O no, I don't mean afraid ; only uneasy as it were : — no, no ! not uneasy neither ; only somewhat as you feel at present, my Lord ; you know best what to call it.

Vald. At a siege !

Page. Dear my Lord, those words are glued to your tongue.

Vald. (not heeding him.) My grandfather perished at a siege, and his grandfather also : is this fate decreed in our family for alternate generations ? *(Sinks into a chair by the table, and Page, seeing him so much absorbed, comes close to him, staring curiously in his face.)*

Vald. Take thy varlet's face out of my sight ; why art thou so near me ? Leave the room, I say. [EXIT Page.]

(Rising, and pacing to and fro as he speaks to himself.)

A hundred dreams prove false for one that prefigures any real event. — It should not have been, however : my mother should have found for me some other occupation than a military life. — Quit it ? No, I can't do that : the world would cry out upon me ; Livia would despise me. — 'Tis a strange thing that women, who can't fight themselves, should so eagerly push us to the work. — Pooh ! am I a fool that it seizes me thus ? — I would this boy, however, had really destroyed the letter.

Enter DARTZ, looking at VALD. some time before he speaks.

Dart. (aside.) This will do; it is working with him. (*Aloud, advancing.*) My dear Count — but don't start, I bring no bad tidings; I come to beg a favour of you.

Vald. (recovering himself.) Say you are come to oblige me.

Dart. I thank you, Valdemere; but faith I'm ashamed to mention it; you will laugh at me for being so superstitious.

Vald. Ha! somebody has been dreaming about you too.

Dart. Should you deem me very credulous if a thing of this nature had power to disturb me?

Vald. 'Tis even so; they have been dreaming all over the house. Ha, ha, ha! And thou art really uneasy about such flummery as this: ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha! this is admirable! delightful! — ha, ha, ha, ha!

Dart. Be more moderate with your merriment: your tears and your laughter come so strangely together, one would take you for an hysterical girl.

Vald. I can't chuse but laugh at your dreamers; ha, ha, ha!

Dart. Don't laugh at me then; for I am neither a dreamer, nor believer in dreams.

Vald. (becoming serious at once.) No! what is it then?

Dart. I'm almost ashamed to tell you, yet I'll throw myself on your mercy and do it. I am

in love then, and fearful of the fortunes of war ; for you know we must expect sharp fighting this ensuing campaign.

Vald. (ruefully.) You think so ?

Dart. I am certain of it. Now, though I have no faith in dreams, I must own I have some in fortune-tellers ; and there is a famous one just come to the castle, whom I would gladly consult. Will you permit me to bring him to your inner apartment there, that he may tell me of my future destiny whatever his art may reveal to him ? Laugh as you please, but refuse me not this favour, for there is no other room in the castle where I can meet him secure from interruption.

Vald. (smiling affectedly.) And thou art really in earnest with this folly ?

Dart. When you have heard the wonderful things this wizard has foretold, you will not call it folly.

Vald. Can'st thou tell me any of them ?

Dart. Take a turn with me on the terrace, and thou shalt hear things that will astonish thee.

Vald. Ha, ha ! it is whimsical to see thee so serious. Such stories are pleasant amusement : I'll attend thee most willingly. [EXEUNT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. — *A small Room in Valdemere's Apartments. Baron BAURCHEL is discovered in the Disguise of a Fortune-teller, with DARTZ standing by him, adjusting part of his Dress.*

Dart. 'Twill do well enough. Stand majestically by this great chair, with your worsted robe thrown over the arm of it ; it will spread out your figure, and make it more imposing. — Bravo ! you assume the astrological dignity to admiration ; the rolling of your eyes under that black hood almost appals me. Be as good an astrologer as you have been an Armenian Jew, Baron, and we shall be triumphant.

Bar. As good, Dartz ! if I am not a dolt, I shall be better ; for there is no danger of losing my temper now ; and being fairly engaged in it, methinks I could assume as many shapes as Proteus, to be revenged on this false hyena and her detestable cub.

Dart. Aye, that is your true spirit. But I must leave you now, and wait in the anti-room for the Count, who will be here presently.

[EXIT.

Bar. (after musing some time.) Superlative baseness and ingratitude ! That sonnet, of all the sonnets I ever wrote, is the most exquisitely

feeling and tender. When I read it to her, she wept. Were her tears feigned? I can't believe it. Assassins will weep at a high-wrought scene of tragedy, and cut the author's throat when it is over. — Even so: it suited her purposes better to laugh at my verses, than acknowledge their genuine effect; and so, forgetting every kindness she owed me — O, the detestable worldling! I'll — hush, hush, hush! they are coming.

Re-enter DARTZ, followed by VALDEMERE, who walks shrinkingly behind, peeping past his shoulder to the Baron, who slightly inclines his body, putting his hand with great solemnity three times to his forehead.

Dart. (*aside to Vald. after a pause.*) Faith, Valdemere, I dare scarcely speak to him; 'tis well you are with me; will you speak to him?

Vald. No, 'tis your own affair; stand to it yourself.

Dart. (*aloud.*) Learned and gifted mortal, we come to thee —

Vald. (*aside, jogging his arm.*) Don't say *we*; 'tis your own affair entirely.

Dart. Well, I should say, gifted sage, not *we*, but *I* come to thee, to know what fortune is abiding me in this up-and-down world. I am a lover and a soldier, and liable, as both, to great vicissitudes.

Bar. Thou say'st truly, my Son; and who is

this young man, so much wiser than thyself, who does not desire to look into futurity?

Dart. It is my friend.

Bar. (*after examining the faces of both for some time.*) Say, more than friend.

Dart. How so?

Bar. (*still continuing to gaze alternately at them.*) 'Tis very wonderful! in all the years of my occult experience, I never met the like before, but once.

Vald. (*aside to Dart.*) What does he mean? Ask him, man.

Dart. You never met the like but once! What mean you, Father?

Bar. (*answers not, but continues to look at them, while Vald., unable to bear it longer, shrinks again behind Dart.*) Shrink not back, young man; my eyes make not the fate they see, and cannot do you harm. — 'Tis wonderful! there is not in your two faces one trait of resemblance, yet your fortunes in the self-same mould are cast: ye are in fate twin-brothers.

Dart. Indeed! then my friend need only listen to my fortune, and he'll have his own into the bargain.

Bar. Nay, nay, my Sons, be advised, and enquire not into futurity. They are the happiest men who have fewest dealings with such miserable beings as myself — beings who are compelled to know the impending evils of hapless humanity, without the power of averting them. Be advised, and suppress unprofitable curiosity.

Dart. By my fay, sage, I cannot suppress it.

Bar. Then let your friend go. He is wise enough not to wish to know his future fate, and I have already said you are in this twin-brothers.

Dart. Retire then, Valdemere.

Vald. (*agitated and irresolute.*) I had better, perhaps.—Yet there is within me a strange and perverse craving—I will retire (*going to the door, and stopping short.*)—Live in fearful ignorance, fancying evils that may never be! 'twere better to know all at once. (*Returning.*) Is it our general fortunes only, or is there some particular circumstance of our fate, now present to your mind, of which you advise us to be ignorant?

Bar. There is —

Vald. (*pulling Dart. by the arm.*) Come away, come away; don't hear it.

Dart. I am bound by some spell; I must stay to hear it.

Vald. I am certainly bound also; I know not how it is; I must hear it too.

Bar. Be it as you will. (*After writing characters on a table, with other mummeries.*) Propose your questions.

Dart. The name, age, and quality of her who is my love! (*Bar. writes again.*) The initials of her name, I protest; and her age to a day, nineteen years and a half! And her quality, good Father?

Bar. Only daughter and heiress of an eminent Dutch butter-dealer.

Dart. Nay, you are scarcely right there, sage; you might at least have called him Burgo-master; but let it pass. She loves me, I hope? (*Bar. nods.*) I knew it. And now let me know if she shall ever be my wife, and how many children we shall have?

Vald. (*aside to Dart.*) Deuce take wife and children too! what is all this drivelling for?

Dart. (*aside to him.*) I thought you were in love as well as myself.

Vald. So I am; but be satisfied that she loves you, and pass on to things of deeper import.

Dart. (*aside.*) Can any thing be of deeper import? (*Aloud.*) I should like very well, gifted Father, to have two or three black-haired burly knaves, and a little fair damsel, to play with.

Vald. (*aside to Dart.*) Would they were all drowned in a horse-pond! Look how ruefully the sage shakes his head at thee: wife or children thou wilt never have.

Dart. Shall I never be married, Father? what shall prevent it?

Bar. Death.

Dart. Shall I lose her? (*Turning to Vald.*) Do you not tremble for Livia?

Vald. Is it her death? did he say so? Ask him.

Bar. Death will prevent it. Let me leave you.

Vald. (*seizing the Baron's robe.*) Whose death? whose death? is it only the lady's?

Bar. Nay, do not detain me. There is a deep depression on my mind. Good night to

you! I'll tell you the remainder when you are better prepared to hear it.

Dart. No, no! the present time is the best.

Vald. (*in a feeble voice.*) You had better let him go.

Dart. (*catching hold of the Bar.*) You must not leave us in this tremendous uncertainty. Whose death shall prevent my marriage?

Bar. Let me examine, then. Stretch out your hand. (*Dartz holds out his hand, and Vald. involuntarily does the same, but draws it back again as Bar. begins to inspect it.*) Nay, don't draw back your hand: I must examine both palms to see if the line of death be there.

Dart. The line of death must be on every man's hand.

Bar. But if it be early or impending death, the waving of the shroud will lie across it. (*Vald. shudders and turns away his head, and the Bar., after looking at both their hands, starts back from them, and shakes his head piteously.*)

Dart. What is the matter, Father? What is the matter?

Bar. Ask not; I will not tell what I know; nothing shall compel me. [EXIT *hastily*.

Vald. (*turning round.*) Is he gone? Went he by the door?

Dart. What way he went I know not. He has vanished I believe: did you hear his steps on the floor?

Vald. I heard nothing.

Dart. (*after a short pause.*) How do you feel, Count?

Vald. Ha! do you feel it too?

Dart. Feel what?

Vald. As if a cold shroud were drawn over you.

Dart. Aye, so I think I do.—But never mind it: we may still have some good months or weeks before us; let us go to the banquet and put a merry face upon it: a cup of wine will warm us again. What, though my grandam dreamt at my birth that I should be slain in a breach, and the weird witch of Croningberg confirmed it; I'll live and be merry while I may.

Vald. Ha! and thy grandam had such a dream!

Dart. Never mind it: a cup of wine will soon cheer us again.

Vald. Would to God I had one now!

Dart. You have no time to take wine at present: I hear a bustle below: they are going to the grotto already.—Who's at the door? (*Opens the door.*) Your valet with your new suit for the banquet. I'll leave you then. (*Exit Dartz, and enter LORIMORE with a suit of cloaths over his arm, followed by Page.*)

Lor. I have waited this half hour, my Lord, to hear your bell, and the ladies are waiting for you to go to the grotto. Look at this coat, my Lord: the fashion of it is exquisite, and it has such an air with it; there is not, besides

yourself, a man in the empire that would know how to wear it.

Page. His consummate valet excepted.

Lor. Hold your peace, Sirrah. — Look here, my Lord; if I had not myself given the tailor a few hints, he could never have had genius enough to finish it in this style. I'd give a ducat that the Marquis De Florimel's valet could see it. He pretends — But you don't look at it, my Lord: what is the matter with you?

Vald. (*eagerly.*) Is any thing the matter?

Lor. Nothing, my Lord; but the ladies are waiting for you to go with them to the grotto: won't you be pleased to put on your new coat?

Vald. Put it on then. (*Stretching out his arms to put on the coat.*)

Lor. But we must first take off the old coat.

Vald. I forgot that. (*Trying to pull off his coat.*) It sticks strangely to me: doff it if thou can'st.

Lor. (*after pulling off his coat.*) Now, my Lord, thrust your arm into this beautiful sleeve; the whole *beau monde* of Paris can't shew you its fellow. — That is the wrong arm, my Lord.

Vald. It will do; it will do.

Lor. Pardon me, my Lord; your left arm won't do for the right sleeve of the coat.

Vald. (*holding out his other arm and fumbling some time.*) There is no hole at all to put my arm into.

Lor. Nay, you push your hand past it; here, here.

Vald. Where sayest thou? 'Tis mightily perplexed.

Page. (*aside to himself.*) Either the coat or the coat's master is perplexed enough. (*Aloud, offering him his hat.*) You won't go, my Lord, without your new hat and plume.

Vald. Plume?

Page. Yes, my Lord, and it will wave so handsomely too, for the company walk by torchlight in procession.

Vald. Let them move on, and I'll follow.

Page. No, they can't go without you, my Lord.

Vald. How is it? Am I one of the pallbearers?

Page. It is not a funeral, my Lord.

Vald. I forgot; the chillness of the night has bewildered me.

Lor. You are not well, my Lord; what is the matter with you?

Vald. Nothing, leave me alone for a little.

Lor. Will you not join the company? The procession is prepared to set out.

Vald. Aye, very true; tell me when they move the body, and I'll follow it.

Page. He, he, he! a funeral again.

Lor. Unmannerly imp; what art thou sniggering at? (*To Vald. in a loud distinct voice.*) It is not a funeral, my Lord. The Lady Livia, and

the Countess your mother, are going to the grotto, and are waiting impatiently below till you join them.

Vald. (*rubbing his forehead.*) It is so: how went it out of my head? That wine after dinner must have fuddled me. I'll join them immediately.

Lor. Lean on me, my Lord; you are not well, I fear.

Vald. No, no; the fumes of that diabolical champaign have left my head now.

Lor. It must have been mixed with some black drug, I think, to produce such a sombre intoxication.

Page. It may rest in the cellar long enough for me; I'll none on't.

Lor. Peace, young Sir; and go before with one of these lights.

[*EXEUNT, Page lighting them.*]

SCENE II.

An arched Grotto, the Roof and Sides of which are crusted over with Shells and Corals, &c.; a Banquet set out, ornamented with Lamps and Festoons of Flowers. Enter Countess, led in by DARTZ, and LIVIA by VALDEMERE, two other Ladies by the Baron and WALTER BAURCHEL, Page and Attendants following.

Liv. Welcome all to my sea-nymph's hall; and do me the honour to place yourselves at

table, as best pleases your fancy, without ceremony. If you hear any sound without, 'tis but the rolling of forty fathom water over-head; and nothing can intrude on our merriment, but a whale, or a mermaid, or a dolphin.

Walt. This same sea-nymph must have an ingenious art of cultivating roses in the bottom of the ocean.

Liv. It must be a perfect contrivance indeed that escapes the correct taste of Mr. Walter Baurchel. Fruit and ices perhaps may likewise be an incongruity: shall I order them away, and feast you on salt water and limpits?

Bar. Aye, pickle him up with brine in a corner by himself, for he has a secret sympathy with every thing uncherishing and pungent.

Liv. Do me the honour to take your places. I can pretty well divine which of the ladies will be your charge, gentle Baron. — But how is this? The Countess and you exchange strange looks, methinks, as if you did not know one another.

Bar. Some people exchange strange looks, fair Livia, from the opposite cause.

Liv. I don't comprehend you: should you have preferred being in masks? That indeed would have been a less common amusement.

Bar. By no means, Madam; the Countess and I meeting one another unmasked is a very uncommon one.

Countess. You know best, Baron, as far as you

are yourself concerned: you always appeared to me a good and amiable man, and a most tender and elegant poet.

Bar. Of which, Madam, you always took great care to inform me, as a sincere and disinterested friend.

Liv. Ha! what is all this? Poo, poo, take your places together as usual: a love-quarrel never mars merry-making.

Walt. Yes, tender doves! let them smooth down their ruffled feathers by one another as sweetly as they can. Why should you, Madam, give yourself any uneasiness about it? — But the Count, methinks, is less sprightly than usual: there are no more love-quarrels, I hope, in the party.

Liv. (*looking at Vald.*) Indeed you are very silent: I have been too much occupied to observe it before. You don't like my grotto, I fear.

Vald. Pardon me; I like it very well; I like it very much.

Liv. But this is not your usual manner of expressing approbation.

Vald. Is it not? you do me honour to remember it. (*Speaking confusedly as the company sit down to table.*) My spirits are very — that is to say, not altogether, but considerably —

Dart. Low, Valdemere?

Vald. (*snatching up a glass, and filling a bumper of wine, which he swallows hastily.*) No, Dartz; light as a feather. My tongue was so con-

foundedly parched: this wine is excellent (*drinking another bumper.*) There is more beauty in these decorations than I was aware of: the effect, the taste is incomparable. (*Drinks again.*) It is truly exquisite.

Walt. The champaign you mean, Count? I should have guessed as much.

Vald. No, no; the decorations. — Is it champaign? Let me judge of its flavour more considerably (*drinks again*): upon honour it is fit for the table of a god. But our hostess is a divinity, and 'tis nectar we quaff at her board.— Wine! common earthly wine! I'll thrust any man thro' with my rapier that says it is but wine.

Bar. Keep your courage for a better cause, Count. Report says the enemy are near us, and you may soon have the honour to exert it in defence of your divinity.

Walt. Which will be a sacred war, you know, and will entitle you perhaps to the glory of martyrdom.

Vald. The enemy?

Walt. Aye, report says they are near us.

Vald. Be it so: I shall be prepared for them (*drinks again*).

Dart. (*aside to Walt.*) By my faith, he will be prepared for them, for he'll fill himself mortal drunk, and frustrate our project entirely. (*Aside to Page.*) Go, boy, and bid them make haste: thou understandest me?

Page. (*aside.*) Trust me for that: the Philistines shall be upon him immediately.

Countess. Valdemere is immeasurably fond of war and of military glory, which the tenderness of a too fearful mother has hitherto with difficulty restrained; and in your cause, charming Livia, he will be enthusiastically devoted.

Liv. I claim him then as my Knight, whenever I stand in need of his valorous arms; though it may, perhaps, prove but a troublesome honour.

Vald. It is an honour I would purchase — aye, purchase with a thousand lives — I say it, divine Livia, with a thousand lives. — Life! — life! — What is it but the breath of a moment: I scorn it. (*Getting up from table, and reeling about.*) The enemy, did they say? Let an host of them come: this sword shall devour every mother's son of them. — I'm prepared for them all.

Bar. (*aside to Dart.*) He is too well prepared; we were foolish to let him drink so much.

Countess. (*aside to Vald.*) Be seated again, you disturb the company.

Vald. (*still reeling about.*) Aye, divine Livia; but the breath of a moment; I scorn it.

(*An alarm without: re-enter Page, as if much frightened.*)

Page. O my Lady Livia! O my master! O gentles all! a party of the enemy is coming to attack the castle, and they'll murder every soul of us.

Vald. Speak plainer, wretch; what said'st thou?

Page. (speaking loud in his ear.) The enemy are coming to attack the castle.

Vald. Thou liest.

Page. I wish I did ; but he will confirm my words.

(Pointing to a Servant, who now enters in alarm.)

Ser. (to Vald.) He speaks truth, my Lord ! they are approaching in great strength.

Vald. Approaching ! are they near us then ?

Page. Aye, marry ! too near. They beat no drum, as you may guess ; but the heavy sound of their march strikes from the hollow ground most fearfully.

(Valdemere becoming perfectly sober, stands confounded.)

Liv. (and the Ladies, much alarmed.) What shall we do ? What will become of us ?

Dart. Have courage, Madam ; have courage, Ladies ; the valiant Valdemere is your defender ; you have nothing to fear.

Liv. (and Ladies, crowding close to Vald.)
Aye, dear Count ; our safety depends on you. Save us ! Save us ! We have no refuge but you.
(All clamouring at once.)

Vald. Hush, hush, hush ! They'll hear you.
(In a low choked voice.)

Dart. Nay, don't whisper, Valdemere ; they are not so near us yet.

Bar. Rouse ye, Count, and give your orders for the defence of the castle immediately.

Dart. We are ready to execute them, be they ever so daring.

Walt. There is no time to be lost ; your orders, Count : do you comprehend us ?

Vald. My orders !

Dart. Your orders quickly.

Vald. I am thinking —— I was thinking ——

Page. (*aside.*) How to save yourself, I believe.

Bar. Well, noble Count, what are your thoughts.

Vald. I — I — I am considering ——

Walt. Thought and consideration become a good Commander, with some spice of activity into the bargain.

Dart. There is no time to deliberate ; issue your orders immediately. Under such an able commander we may stand a siege of some days.

Vald. A siege ! — Aye, the very thing — and so suddenly !

Page. You tremble, my Lord ; shall I bring you drops ?

Countess. Thou liest, Boy ; get thee gone ! (*Aside to Vald.*) Are you beside yourself ? Tell them what to do ; they wait for your orders.

Vald. I order them all to the walls. Haste, haste, (*pushing off the Ladies who stand next him,*) and man them as well as you can.

Bar. Woman them, you mean, Valdemere ; these are Ladies you push.

Countess. Nay ; you crowd upon him too much — you confuse him : he is as brave as his sword, if you would leave off confounding him so.

Liv. Dear Valdemere ! What is the matter ? Rouse yourself, rouse yourself ! (*A great alarm without.*) Hear that sound : they are at hand ; what shall we do ? There is a vault by the side of this grotto, where we poor miserable women may be concealed, but ——

Vald. (*eagerly.*) Where is it ? My duty is to take care of you, dear Livia : come, come with me, and I'll place you in security. (*Catches hold of the Page in his hurry, and runs off with him.*)

Countess. Stop, stop ! That is the Page you have got. Will you leave me behind you ?

(*As Vald. is about to drag the Page into a recess at the side of the stage, the Boy laughs outright, and he discovers his mistake.*)

Vald. Off, Wretch ! Where is Livia ; come, come, my Life ! where are you ? (*Stretching out one hand to her, while his body bends eagerly the other way.*)

Liv. No, Count ; I will not go. Alarm overcame me for the moment ; but now I will enter the castle ; and if the enemy should take it, they shall find me there in a situation becoming its mistress.

Omnes. Bravely said, Lady ! Let us all to the castle.

Dart. With or without a commander, we'll defend it to the last extremity.

Countess. (*going to Vald. and speaking in his ear, while she pulls him along with her.*) Come

with the rest, or be disgraced for ever. Did I put a sword by your side, a cockade in your hat, for this?

(A still louder alarm without, and EXEUNT in great hurry and confusion.)

SCENE III.

A Grove by the Castle; the Scene darkened, and moving Lights seen through the Trees from the Castle, sometimes gleaming from the Battlements, and sometimes from the Windows: Enter NINA, with a Peasant's Surtout over her Dress.

Nin. O, if in this disguise I could but enter the castle! Alas! the company are gone in, and the gate is now shut. I'll wait here till day-break.—Woe is me! He past by me quickly, and heard me not when I spoke to him.—O mercy! Soldiers coming here! *(Hides herself amongst some bushes.)*

Enter BOUNCE, followed by Soldiers.

Bounce. Come, let us hector it here awhile: I'll warrant ye we make a noise that might do for the siege of Troy.

1st Soldier. Aye, you're a book-learned man, Corporal: you're always talking of that there siege. Could they throw a bomb in those days, or fire off an eighteen-pounder any better than ourselves?

(Firing heard without.)

Bounce. Hark! our comrades are at it on the other side: let us to it here at the same time. I'll warrant ye we'll make the fair Lady within, and my Lady's fair gentlewomen, and the village Cure himself, should he be of the party, cast up their eyes like boiled fish, and say ten pater-nosters in a breath.

(Voices without.)

Hallo! hallo! comrades!

Who goes there?

Enter 2d Soldier and others.

2d Sold. What makes you so quiet, an' be hanged to you! An old woman with her spinning-wheel might be stationed here to as much purpose. I could not tell where to find you.

Bounce. By my faith, 'tis the first time Corporal Bounce was ever accused of not making noise enough. Come; we'll give you a round shall make the whole principality tremble.

(They prepare to fire, when 3d Soldier enters in haste.)

3d Sold. Hold, there! Spare your powder for better purpose: an advanced corps of the enemy is coming in good earnest, and marching in haste to the castle.

Bounce. So, we're to have real fighting then! Faith, comrade, valiant as I am, a little sham thunder, and a good supper after it, would have pleased my humour full as well at this present time. Pest take it! They must open the gates

and let us in. What gentlemen are in the castle? We have no officer to command us.

3d Sold. The Chevalier Dartz is there, and Count Valdemere.

Bounce. Ah! he's but a craven-bird, that same Count: a kind of Free-mason-soldier, for parades and processions, and the like. If the young Baron de Bertrand were there, we should be nobly commanded.

3d Sold. Don't stand prating here; let us give the alarm to the rest of our comrades, and get into the castle ere the enemy come up with us.

Bounce. Come, then! But what moves amongst the bushes? (*Pulling out Nina.*) A girl, i'faith, disguised in a countryman's surtout.

Nin. O dear—O mercy! Don't be angry with me: I'm a poor harmless creature.

Bounce. Blessings on thee, pretty one! thou'rt harmless enough: don't think we're afraid of thee. Come away with us: we'll lodge thee safely in the castle.

[EXEUNT.]

ACT V.

SCENE I. — *A Hall in the Castle: Enter LIVIA and the Baron, talking as they enter.*

Liv. Yes, Baron; you and your friends have, by this plot of yours, taught me a severe lesson; and I thank you for it, though my own understanding ought to have made it unnecessary.

Bar. Dear Livia; why should a young woman like you be so much affronted at finding her understanding—for you are mighty fond of that word *understanding*—not quite infallible? At the age of 63, an age I shall henceforth honestly own I have attained, one is not surprised at some small deficiencies even in one's own understanding. One can then, as I shall henceforth do, give up the vanity of being a wise man.

Liv. And a poet, too, Baron? That were too much to give up in one day.

Bar. Posterity will settle that point, Madam, and I shall give myself very little concern about the matter.

Liv. Which one can easily perceive is perfectly indifferent to you. (*Noise without.*) What encreased noise is that? Since your poor victim is already sacrificed, (for they tell me he is gone,

on pretence of violent illness, to the vaults under the castle,) why continue this mock-war any longer ?

Enter Servant.

Bar. By this man's looks one might suppose that our mockery had turned to earnest.

Liv. (to *Serv.*) What is the matter ?

Serv. A party of the real enemy, Madam, has come to attack the castle, and is now fighting with the Chevalier's men at the gate.

Liv. Why did you not open the gate to receive the Chevalier's men ?

Serv. They called to us to get in ; but we could not distinguish them from the enemy, who were close on their heels ; so we let down the portcullis, an't please you, and they must fight it out under the walls as they can.

Bar. Is the Chevalier in the castle ?

Serv. O lud, no, Sir ! he sallied out by the postern with Mr. Walter Baurchel and some of the domestics, and is fighting with them like a devil. But his numbers are so small, we fear he must be beaten ; and ———

Liv. And how can we hold out with neither men, ammunitiion, nor provisions. Merciful Heaven deliver us !

Enter Maid-Servants, wringing their hands.

Maids. O lud, lud ! What will become of us ? What will become of us ? What shall we do ?

Bar. Any thing you please but stun us with such frantic clamour. Get off to your laundries and your store-rooms, and your dressing closets, and don't encrease the confusion here.

(*EXEUNT Maids, clamouring and wringing their hands.*)

Liv. You are rough with those poor creatures ; they are very much frightened.

Bar. Not half so frightened as those who make less noise. They think it necessary to raise an out-cry, because they are women, and it is expected from them. I have been long enough duped in this way ; I have no patience with it now. — But I must go to the walls and try to be of use. (*going.*)

(*Voice without.*) Succour ! succour !

Liv. Ha ! there is a welcome cry.

Enter JEANETTA.

Succour did they say ?

Jean. Yes, my lady : a band of men come to relieve us ; and their leader is charging the enemy so furiously sword in hand ! — the Chevalier, they said, fought like a devil ; but he fights like forty devils. We have been looking down upon them by torch-light from the walls ; and their swords flash, and their plumes nod, and their eyes glare in the light so gallantly, I could almost sally out myself and take about with them.

Bar. (*to Jean.*) Aye, Minx ; thou'rt forward enough to do any thing.

Liv. Nay, chide her not when she brings us good news. — Heaven be praised for this timely aid! What brave man has brought it to us? Dost thou know him, Jeanetta?

Jean. No, Madam: for, thank God! his back is to us and his face to the foe; but there is a smack in his air of the Baron de Bertrand.

Bar. Ha! my brave Antonio! I'll be sworn it is he. Come; let us to the ramparts, and look down on the combatants.

Liv. Heaven grant there be not much bloodshed!
[EXEUNT.]

SCENE II.

A dark Vault: Enter VALDEMERE, followed by Page, carrying a torch in one hand, and his plumed Cap in the other.

Vald. (after hurrying some paces onward, stops short, and looks wildly round him.) Is there no passage this way?

Page. No, my Lord; but you run marvelously fast for one so ill as you are: I could scarcely keep up with you: pray stop here a-while and take breath.

Vald. Stop here, and that sound still behind me!

Page. What sound?

Vald. Did'st thou not hear the tread of heavy steps behind us? The trampling of a whole band?

Page. It was but the sound of my feet following you.

Vald. Only that. The castle is taken thou say'st, and the ruffians are in quest of me.

Page. Aye, marry are they ! Their savage leader says, as the old tale book has it, that he'll have the heart's blood of Count Valdemere on his sword before he eat or sleep.

Vald. His sword !

Page. Aye, my Lord, a good heavy rapier, I assure you ; and he swears, since you have not fought like a man on the walls, he'll kill you like a rat in your hole.

Vald. I am horribly beset !

Page. Aye, hot work, my Lord ; the big drops fall from your forehead, like a thunder shower.

Vald. Thou liest ; I am cold as the damp of a sepulchre.

Page. And pale too, as the thing that lies within it.

Vald. (*listening.*) Hark, hark ! they are coming.

Page. I hear nothing.

Vald. Thou dost ! thou dost ! lying varlet, with that treacherous leer upon thy face : thou hast decoyed me here for destruction. (*Catching him by the throat.*)

Page. For mercy, my Lord, let go your hold ! I hear nothing, as I hope to be saved, but our own voices sounding again from the vaulted roof over our heads.

Vald. Aye, it is vaulted ; thou'rt right perhaps. — This strange ringing in my ears will not suffer me to know the sounds that really are, from those are not. — Why dost thou grin so ? I have a frenzy, I believe ; I know I am strangely disordered. It was not so with me yesterday. I could then — Dost thou grin still ? Stand some paces off : why art thou always so near me ?

Page. (*retiring to the opposite side of the stage.*) I had best, perhaps : his hand has the gripe of a madman.

Vald. (*leans his back against the side-scene, pressing his temples tightly with both hands, and speaking low to himself.*) This horrible tumult of nature ! it knows within itself the moments that precede its destruction.

Page. I must let him rest for a time. (*Pause.*) — It is cold here doing nothing. (*Puts on his cap.*) — He moves not : his eyes have a fixed ghastly stare ; truly he is ill. (*Going up to him.*) You are very ill, my Lord.

Vald. (*starting.*) Have mercy upon me !

Page. Don't start, my Lord ; it was I who spoke to you.

Vald. Who art thou ?

Page. Your Page, my Lord.

Vald. Ha ! only thou ! thy stature seemed gigantic.

Page. This half-yard of plume in my cap, and your good fancy, have made it so.

Vald. Aye; thou wert unbonnetted before. Keep by me then, but don't speak to me. (*Putting his hand again to his temples.*)

Page. Nay, I must ask what is the matter. You are very ill: what is the matter with you?

Vald. There is a beating within me like the pendulum of a great clock.

Page. Is it in your heart or your head, my Lord?

Vald. Don't speak to me: it is every where.

Page. Rest here a while; they will not discover you. You are indeed very ill.—Are you worse?

Vald. Speak not; my mouth is parched like a cinder; I can't answer thee.

Page. I'll fetch you some water. (*Going.*)

Vald. (*springing across the stage after him.*) Not for the universe.

Page. (*aside.*) He's strong enough still I see. (*Turning his ear to the entry of the vault.*)

Vald. Thou'rt listening; thou hear'st something.

Page. By my faith, they are coming now.

Vald. Merciful heaven! where shall I run?

Page. Where you please, my Lord.

Vald. (*hurrying two or three steps on, in a kind of groping way.*) The light fails me: I don't see where I am going.

Page. Nay, it burns very clearly; I fear it will discover where we are.

Vald. Put it out! put it out, for God's sake!

— Where is it? (*Seizes on the torch, puts it out, stamping on it with his feet, then laying himself on the floor.*) I am gone—I am dead; tell them so, for God's sake!

Page. I shall tell but half a lie when I do.

Enter Baron and WALTER BAURCHEL, with Soldier's Cloaks thrown over them, and LIVIA in the same Disguise with a military Cap drawn over her Eyes, a Servant preceding them with Torches.

Liv. (*shrinking back as she enters.*) Is he dead?

(*Page nods, and winks to her significantly.*)

Bar. (*in a rough voice.*) Has the caitiff escaped my sword? Have I thirsted for his blood in vain?

Walt. (*in a rough voice also.*) Is he really dead? I'll lay my hand on his breast, and feel if his heart beats.

Page. O don't do that, gracious, merciful Sir! You'll but defile your worshipful fingers in touching of a dead corse, which brings bad luck with it.

Walt. Well then, Boy, I will not; but there are a couple of brawny knaves without, who are burying the dead for us; they shall come forth-with, and cast him into the pit with the rest.

Page. O lud, no, Sir! don't do that, please your worshipful goodness! What if he should come alive again?

Walt. Never fear that: I'll draw this rapier cross his laced cravat, and make it secure.

Vald. (*starting up upon his knees.*) Mercy,

mercy! slay not a dying man; let me breathe my last breath without violence.

Liv. (*covering her eyes, and turning away her head.*) Torment him no more, I beseech you!

Enter ANTONIO, and DARTZ with his arm bound up.

Ant. Nay, Gentlemen, this is unfeeling, ungenerous, unmanly. Stand upon your feet, Count Valdermere, (*raising him up,*) there are none but friends near you, if friends they may be called, who have played you such an abominable trick.

Vald. How is this? Art thou Antonio? Where are those who would have butcher'd me?

Omnes, Liv. and Ant. excepted. Ha, ha, ha! (*laughing some time.*)

Bar. No where, Valdemere, but in your own imagination. We have put this deceit upon you to cure you of arrogance and boasting.

Walt. Running the usual risk, gentle Count, of not having our services very thankfully acknowledged.

Vald. You have laid a diabolical snare for me, and I have fallen into it most wretchedly. — I have been strangely overcome. I have been moved as with magic. — I have been — I — I know not — What shall I call it?

Walt. Give yourself no trouble about that, Count; we can find a name for it.

Ant. Nay, good Sir; you shall not call it by any name a man would be asham—— (*correct-*

ing himself.) unwilling to hear. The Count, as Dartz has informed me, while I bound up his wound above stairs, has been tampered with, by dreams and fortune-telling and other devices, in a way that might have overcome many a man, who, differently circumstanced, would not have shrunk from his duty in the field. And shall we sport wantonly with a weakness of our nature in some degree common to all? We admire a brave man for overcoming it, and should pity the less brave when it overcomes him.

Liv. (*catching his hand eagerly.*) Noble Antonio!

Ant. Young man, I thank you: this squeeze of the hand tells me I have you upon my side.

Vald. And let me also say, "Noble Antonio!" — And what more can I say! I have not deserved this generous treatment from you.

Ant. Say nothing more: the transactions of this night shall be as if they had never been: they will never be mentioned by any of us.

Walt. Speak for yourself, Antonio de Bertrand; my tongue is a free agent, and will not be bridled by another person's feelings. But there is one condition on which I consent to be silent as the grave; and the Baron and Chevalier concur with me.

Bar. and *Dartz.* We do so.

[EXIT Bar.

Dart. We but require of Valdemere to do what, as a man of honour he is bound to do; and satisfied on this point, our silence is secured for ever.

Re-enter BARON leading in NINA.

Bar. (to Vald.) Look on this fair gentlewoman : her father was a respectable officer, though misfortunes prevented his promotion. You have taken advantage of her situation, being under the protection of the Countess your mother, as a god-daughter and distant relation, to use her most unworthily. Make her your wife, and receive, as her dowry, your reputation in the world untarnished.

Walt. Now, good, heroic, sentimental Antonio ; is this too much to require of the noble personage you plead for ?

Ant. On this I am compelled to be silent.

Bar. Will Count Valdemere vouchsafe us an answer ? Will you marry her or not, Count ?

Vald. I have indeed — I ought in strict justice — She will not accept of one who has used her so unworthily.

Page. (eagerly.) I hope not : I would rather than a thousand crowns she would refuse him.

Dart. Will you have him or not, pretty Nina ? Don't be afraid to refuse him : we shan't think the worse of you if you do. (*Nina stands silent and weeping.*)

Page. (aside to Nina.) Don't have him, woman ; he's a coward and a coxcomb, and a — don't have him.

Nina. (aside.) Ah, you have never loved him as I have done, Brother.

Page. (*aloud.*) Murrain take thee and thy love too! thou hast no more spirit in thee than a worm.

Bar. Bravo, Boy! thou hast enough of it, I see; and I'll put a stand of colours into thy hand as soon as thou art strong enough to carry them. Thou art my boy now; I will protect thee.

Page. I thank you, Baron. — And my sister; will you protect her too?

Bar. Yes, Child; both of you.

Page. Refuse him then, Nina: hast thou no more pride about thee?

Nina. Alas! I should have more pride: I know I should; but I have been sadly humbled.

Page. Thou'lt be still more so if thou art his wife, trust me! for he'll despise thee, and cow thee, and make thee a poor slave to his will. Thou'lt tremble at every glance of his eye, and every turn of his humoursome fancy. — He'll treat thee like a very —

Vald. Stop, spiteful wretch! I'll cherish and protect her, and turn every word thou hast uttered to a manifest and abominable falsehood. — Give me thy hand, Nina; thou really lovest me; no one will do it but thee; and I shall have need of somebody to love me.

Omnes. Well said, Count! this is done like a man!

Ant. (*to Page.*) Faith, Boy! those sharp words of thine were worth a store of gentle persuasion. Thou hast woo'd for thy sister in a spell-like fashion as witches say their prayers backwards.

I wish somebody would court my mistress for me in the same manner: 'tis the only chance I have of winning her.

Liv. (in a feigned voice.) I'll do that for thee, gallant De Bertand; for I know faults enough of yours to acquaint her with, besides the greatest of all faults, concealing good talents *under a bushel*; every tittle of which I will tell her forthwith, and she'll marry you, no doubt, out of spite.

Ant. Thanks, pleasant stripling! May thy success be equal to thy zeal! (*taking her hand.*) Thy name, youth? thou hast a pretty gait in that warlike cloak of thine, but thy cap overshadows thee perversely.—Ha! this is not a boy's hand! — That ring — O Heavens!

(*Retires some paces back in confusion, while Livia, taking off her cap and cloak, makes him a profound curtesy; and pauses, expecting him to speak. Finding him silent, she begins to rub her hand, and look at it affectedly.*)

Liv. It is not a boy's hand, Baron de Bertrand: 'tis the hand of a weak foolish woman, which shall be given to a lover of hers who is not much wiser than herself, whenever he has courage to ask it.

Walt. (aside, jogging Ant.) That is thyself: dost thou not apprehend her, man?

Liv. (still looking at her hand.) Even so; whenever he has courage to ask it. That, I suppose, may happen in about five or six years from this present time.

Ant. (*running up to her, catching her hand, and putting his knee to the ground.*) Now, now, dear Livia! O that I could utter what I feel! — I am a fool still; — I cannot.

Liv. Nothing you can possibly say will make me more sensible of your generous worth, or more ashamed of my former injustice to it.

(*All crowd round Ant. and Liv. to congratulate them, when the Countess is heard speaking angrily without.*)

Dart. We must pay our compliments another time; I fear there is a storm ready to burst upon us.

Enter Countess.

Countess. Yes, Gentlemen; I have heard of your plot, as you call it; a diabolical conspiracy for debasing the merit you envy. I despise you all: you are beneath my anger.

Walt. Let us escape it then.

Countess. (*to Walt.*) Aye, snarling Cynic! who hast always a prick of thy adder's tongue to bestow upon every one whom the world admires or caresses; thou art the wicked mover of all these contrivances. (*To the Bar.*) As for you, poor antiquated *rhime-maker!* had I but continued to praise your verses, you would have suffered me to ruin your whole kindred very quietly; nor had one single grain of compunction disturbed the sweet calm of your gratified vanity.

Bar. Nay, Madam; I cannot charge my memory with any interruption of your goodness,

in this respect, to my face: had you been as perseveringly obliging behind my back, we might indeed have remained longer friends than would have been entirely for the interest of my heir.

Countess. Well, well; may every urchin of the principality learn by rote some scrap of your poetry, and mouth it at you as often as you stir abroad! (*To Liv.*) And you, Madam; you are here, too, amongst this worshipful divan! This is your hospitality — your delicacy — your — O! may you wed a tyrant for your pains, and these walls prove your odious prison! — But I spend my words vainly: where is the unhappy victim of your envious malevolence? They told me he was here. (*Discovering Vald. and Nina retired to the bottom of the stage.*) Ha! you are here, patiently enduring their triumph, degenerate boy! Is this the fruit of all my cares? Did I procure for you a military appointment, did I tease every creature connected with me for your promotion, did I ruin myself for your extravagant martial equipments — and has it all come to this?

Vald. You put me into the army, Madam, to please your own vanity; and they who thrust their sons into it for that purpose, are not always gratified.

Countess. And you answer me thus! I have spoilt you, indeed; and an indulged child, I find, does not always prove a dutiful one. Who is that you hold by the hand?

Vald. My wife, Madam.

Countess. Your wife! You do not say so: you dare not say so. Have they imposed a wife upon you also? Let go her unworthy hand.

Vald. No, Madam; never. It is my hand that is unworthy to hold so much innocent affection.

Countess. You are distracted: let go her hand, or I renounce you for ever. — What, will you not?

Vald. I will not.

Countess. Thou can'st be sturdy, I find, only for thine own ruin. They have confounded and bewildered thee: thou hast joined the conspiracy against thyself, and thy poor mother. — O, I could hate thee more than them all! — Heaven grant me patience!

Walt. I like to hear people pray for what they really want.

Countess. Insolent! Heaven grant you what you need not pray for, the detestation of every one annoyed with your pestiferous society.

[EXIT *in rage*.

Dart. Let us be thankful this tornado is over, and the hurry of an eventful day and night so happily concluded. — I hope, charming Livia, you forgive our deceit, and regret not its consequences.

Liv. The only thing to be regretted, Chevalier, is the wound you have received.

Dart. Thank God! this, though but slight, is the only harm that has been done to-night,

a broken pate or two excepted ; and our feigned attack upon the castle has been providentially the means of defending it from a real one. Had not Antonio, however, who was not in our plot, come so opportunely to our aid, we had been beaten. — But now that I have time to enquire, how did'st thou come so opportunely ?

Ant. I have been in the habit of wandering after dark round the walls. Livia knows not how many nights I have watched the light gleaming from the window of her chamber. Wandering then, as usual, I discovered a corps of the enemy on their march to the castle, and went immediately for succour, which I fortunately found. We have both fought stoutly, my friend, with our little force ; but the blows have fallen to your share, and the blessing to mine.

Dart. Not so ; friends keep not their shares so distinctly.

Liv. True, Chevalier ; and you claim, besides, whatever satisfaction you may have from the gratitude of this good company, for contriving a plot that has ended so fortunately.

Dart. Nay, there is, I fear, one person in this good company, from whom my claims, of this kind, are but small. — Count Valdemere, can you forgive me ?

Vald. Ask me not at present, Dartz. I know that my conduct to Antonio did deserve correction ; but you have taken a revenge for him with merciless severity, which he would

himself have been too generous, too noble, to have taken.

Dart. Well, Count, I confess I stand somewhat reproved and conscience-stricken before you.

Walt. (*to Dart.*) Why, truly, if he forgive thee, or any of us, by this day twelve-month, it will be as much as we can reasonably expect.

Dart. Be it so! And now we have all pardon to ask, where, I hope, it will be granted immediately. (*Bowing to the audience.*)

THE END OF THE SIEGE.

THE BEACON :
A SERIOUS MUSICAL DRAMA,
IN TWO ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

ULRICK, *Lord of the Island.*

ERMINGARD.

BASTIANI, *Friend of Ulrick.*

GARCIO, *Friend of Ermingard.*

Page.

Pope's Legate.

Knights of St. John of Jerusalem.

Fishermen, Singers, Attendants of the
Legate, &c.

WOMEN.

AURORA.

TERENTIA, *a noble Lady, and Governante to
Aurora.*

VIOLA, } *Ladies attending on Aurora.*
EDDA, }

Scene, a small Island of the Mediterranean.

Time, towards the middle of the 14th Century.

THE BEACON.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *A Grove adjoining to a castellated Building, part of which only is seen. Several People are discovered near the Window of one of its Towers, who begin to sing as the Curtain draws up.*

Song of several voices.

*Up! quit thy bower, late wears the hour ;
Long have the rooks caw'd round thy tower ;
On flower and tree, loud hums the bee ;
The wilding kid sports merrily :
A day so bright, so fresh, so clear,
Shineth when good fortune 's near.*

*Up! Lady fair, and braid thy hair,
And rouze thee in the breezy air ;
The lulling stream, that sooth'd thy dream,
Is dancing in the sunny beam ;
And hours so sweet, so bright, so gay,
Will waft good fortune on its way.*

*Up! time will tell ; the friar's bell
Its service-sound hath chimed well ;*

*The aged crone keeps house alone,
And reapers to the fields are gone ;
The active day so boon and bright,
May bring good fortune ere the night.*

Enter Page.

Page. Leave off your morning songs, they
come too late ;
My Lady hath been up these two good hours,
And hath no heart to listen to your lays !
You should have cheer'd her sooner.

1st. Sing. Her nightly vigils make the ev'ning
morn.

And thus we reckon'd time.

Page. Well, go ye now ;
Another day she'll hear your carols out.

(*EXEUNT Page and Singers severally, by
the bottom of the stage, while ULRICK
and TERENTIA enter by the front, speak-
ing as they enter.*)

Ul. Thou pleadest in vain : this night shall be
the last.

Ter. Have patience, noble Ulrick ; be assur'd,
Hope, lacking nourishment, if left alone,
Comes to a natural end. Then let Aurora,
Night after night, upon the lofty cliff,
Her beacon watch : despondency, ere long,
Will steal upon the sad unvaried task.

Ul. Sad and unvaried ! Aye ; to sober minds
So doth it seem indeed. I've seen a child,
Day after day, to his dead hedgeling bring
The wonted mess, prepared against its waking,

'Till from its putrid breast each feather dropt :
Or on the edge of a clear stream hold out
His rod and baitless line from morn till noon,
Eyeing the spotted trout, that past his snare
A thousand times hath glided, till by force
His angry Dame hath dragg'd him from his
station.

Hope is of such a tough continuous nature,
That, waiting thus its natural end, my life
Shall to an end wear sadly. Patience, say'st
thou !

I have too long been patient.

Ter. Then, be it known to thee, despondency
Already steals upon her ; for she sits not
So oft' as she was wont upon the beach,
But in her chamber keeps in sombre silence ;
And when the night is come, less eagerly
She now enquires if yet the beacon's light
Peer down the woody pass, that to the cliff
Nightly conducts her toilsome steps. I guess,
Soon of her own accord she'll watch no more.

Ul. No, thou unwisely guessest. By that
flame

I do believe some spirit of the night
Comes to her mystic call, and soothes her ear
With whisper'd prophecies of good to come.

Ter. In truth my Lord, you do yourself talk
strangely ;

These are wild thoughts.

Ul. Nay, be thou well assur'd,
Spell-bound she is : night hath become her day :

On all wild songs, and sounds, and ominous things,

(Shunning the sober intercourse of friends
Such as affliction courts,) her ear and fancy
Do solely dwell. This visionary state
Is foster'd by these nightly watchings ; there-
fore,

I say again, I will no more endure it ;
This night shall be the last.

Ter. That Ermingard upon the plains of
Palestine

Fell on that fatal day, what sober mind
Can truly doubt ; altho' his corpse, defaced,
Or hid by other slain, was ne'er discover'd.
For, well I am assured, had he survived it,
Knowing thou wer't his rival, and Aurora
Left in this isle, where thou bear'st sov'reign
sway,

He, with a lover's speed, had hasten'd back.
All, whom the havoc of the battle spared,
Have to their homes return'd. — Thou shak'st
thy head,

Thou dost not doubt ?

Ul. We'll speak of this no more.
I'm sick and weary of these calculations.
We must and will consider him as dead ;
And let Aurora know —

Enter BASTIANI.

(*To Bast. angrily.*) Why, Bastiani,
Intrud'st thou thus, regardless of my state :

These petty cares are grown most irksome to me;
I cannot hear thee now.

Bast. Indeed, my Lord, it is no petty care
Compels me to intrude. Within your port
A vessel from the holy land has moor'd.

Ul. (*starting.*) Warriors from Palestine?

Bast. No, good my Lord!
The holy legate on his way to Rome;
Who, by late tempests driven on our coasts,
Means here his shatter'd pinnacle to refit,
And give refreshment to his weary train.

Ul. In evil hour he comes to lord it here.

Bast. He doth appear a meek and peaceful
man.

Ul. 'Tis seeming all. I would with mailed
foes

Far rather in th' embattled plain contend
Than strive with such my peaceful town within.
Already landed say'st thou?

Bast. Yes, from the beach their grave pro-
cession comes.

Between our gazing sight and the bright deep,
That glows behind them in the western sun,
Crosses and spears and croziers shew aloft
Their darken'd spikes, in most distinct con-
fusion;

While grey-cowl'd monks, and purple-stoled
priests,

And crested chiefs a closing group below,
Motley and garish, yet right solemn too,
Move slowly on. —

Ul. Then must I haste to meet them.

Bast. Or be most strangely wanting in respect.

For every street and alley of your city
 Its eager swarm pours forth to gaze upon them :
 The very sick and dying, whose wan cheeks
 No more did think to meet the breath of
 heaven,

Creep to their doors, and stretch their wither'd
 arms

To catch a benediction. Blushing maids,
 Made bold by inward sense of sanctity,
 Come forth with threaded rosaries in their hands
 To have them by the holy prelate bless'd ;
 And mothers hold their wond'ring infants up,
 That touch of passing cowl or sacred robe
 May bring them good. And in fair truth, my
 Lord,

Amongst the crowd the rev'rend legate seems
 Like a right noble and right gentle parent
 Cheering a helpless race.

Ul. Aye, 'tis right plain thou art besotted too.
 Were he less gentle I should fear him less.

[EXIT.

Bast. He's in a blessed mood : what so disturbs him ?

Ter. What has disturb'd him long, as well
 thou knowest :

Aurora's persevering fond belief
 That her beloved Ermingard still lives,
 And will return again. To guide his bark
 Upon our dang'rous coast, she nightly kindles
 Her watch-fire, sitting by the lonely flame ;

For so she promis'd, when he parted from her,
To watch for his return.

Bast. Ulrick in wisdom should have married
them

Before he went, for then the chance had been
She had not watch'd so long.

Your widow is a thing of more docility
Than your lorn maiden.— Pardon, fair Terentia.

Ter. Thy tongue wags freely. Yet, I must
confess,

Had Ulrick done what thou call'st wisely, he
The very thing had done which as her kinsman
He was in duty bound to. But, alas !

A wayward passion warp'd him from the right,
And made him use his power ungen'rously
Their union to prevent.

Bast. But tho' the death of Ermingard were
prov'd,

Think'st thou Aurora would bestow her hand
On one who has so long her wishes cross'd,
A lover cloth'd in stern authority ?

Ter. I know not ; Ulrick fondly so believes ;
And I, altho' allied to him by blood,
The playmate also of his early days,
Dare not an opposite opinion utter.

Bast. Hark there ! I hear without th' ap-
proaching crowd.

My duty on this public ceremony
I must attend for honour of the state.
In petty courts like this, on such occasions,
One spangled doublet more or less bears count.
[EXEUNT *severally.*

SCENE II.

An Arbour, supported by rustic wooden Pillars, twined round with Flowers and green Plants, and a Flower Garden seen in the back Ground between the Pillars. Enter Page, followed by EDDA, speaking as she enters.

Ed. Yes, do so, boy ; Aurora is at hand. —
But take with thee, besides, this little basket,
And gather roses in the farther thicket,
Close to the garden gate. —

Page. (*taking the basket.*)
Give it me then. She chid me yesterday
For gath'ring full-spread roses, whose loose leaves
Fell on her lap : to-day I'll fill my basket
With buds, and budlings, and half-open'd
flowers,
Such as nice dames do in their kerchiefs place.

Ed. Prate less and move thee quicker. Get
thee hence.
See there thy mistress comes : haste to thy task.
[EXIT Page.

Enter AURORA and TERENTIA.

Ter. Here you will find a more refreshing air ;
The western sun beats fiercely.

Aur. Western sun !
Is time so far advanced ? I left my couch
Scarcely an hour ago.

Ter. You are deceived.
Three hours have past, but past by you un-
heeded ;

Who have the while in silent stillness sat,
Like one forlorn, that has no need of time.

Aur. In truth I now but little have to do
With time or any thing besides. It passes ;
Hour follows hour ; day follows day ; and year,
If I so long shall last, will follow year :
Like drops that thro' the cavern'd hermit's roof
Some cold spring filters ; glancing on his eye
At measured intervals, but moving not
His fix'd unvaried notice.

Ed. Nay, dearest Lady, be not so depress'd.
You have not ask'd me for my song to-day —
The song you prais'd so much. Shall I not
sing it ?

I do but wait your bidding.

Aur. I thank thy kindness ; sing it if thou wilt.
(*Sits down on a low seat, her head supported
between both her hands, with her elbows
resting on her knees.*)

SONG.

*Where distant billows meet the sky,
A pale, dull light the seamen spy,
As spent they stand and tempest-tost,
Their vessel struck, their rudder lost ;
While distant homes where kinsmen weep,
And graves full many a fathom deep,
By turns their fitful, gloomy thoughts pourtray :
“ 'Tis some delusion of the sight,
Some northern streamer's paly light.”
“ Fools !” saith rous'd Hope with gen'rous scorn,
“ It is the blessed peep of morn,
And aid and safety come when comes the day.”*

*And so it is ; the gradual shine
 Spreads o'er heaven's verge its lengthen'd line :
 Cloud after cloud begins to glow
 And tint the changeful deep below ;
 Now sombre red, now amber bright,
 Till upward breaks the blazing light ;
 Like floating fire the gleamy billows burn :
 Far distant on the ruddy tide,
 A black'ning sail is seen to glide ;
 Loud bursts their eager joyful cry,
 Their hoisted signal waves on high,
 And life and strength and happy thoughts return.*

Ter. Is not her voice improved in power and
 sweetness ?

Ed. It is a cheering song.

Aur. It cheers those who are cheer'd.

(After a pause.)

Twelve years are past ;
 Their daughters matrons grown, their infants
 youths,
 And they themselves with aged furrows mark'd ;
 But none of all their kin are yet return'd ;
 No, nor shall ever.

Ter. Still run thy thoughts upon those hapless
 women
 Of that small hamlet, whose advent'rous peasants
 To Palestine with noble Baldwin went,
 And ne'er were heard of more ?

Aur. They perish'd there ; and of their dis-
 mal fate
 No trace remain'd — none of them all return'd.

Did'st thou not say so? — Husbands, lovers,
friends,

Not one return'd again.

Ter. So I believe.

Aur. Thou but believest then?

Ter. As I was told —

Ed. Thou hast the story wrong.
Four years gone by, one did return again;
But marr'd, and maim'd, and chang'd — a woe-
ful man.

Aur. And what tho' every limb were hack'd
and maim'd,
And roughen'd o'er with scars? — he did return.
(*Rising lightly from her seat.*)

I would a pilgrimage to Iceland go,
To the Antipodes or burning zone,
To see that man who did return again,
And her who did receive him. — Did receive him!
O what a moving thought lurks here! — How
was't?

Tell it me all: and oh, another time,
Give me your tale ungarbled. —

Enter VIOLA.

Ha, Viola! 'tis my first sight of thee
Since our long vigil. Thou hast had, I hope,
A sound and kindly sleep.

Viol. Kindly enough, but somewhat cross'd
with dreams.

Aur. How cross'd? what was thy dream?
O tell it me!

I have an ear that craves for every thing

That hath the smallest sign or omen in it.

It was not sad ?

Viol. Nay, rather strange ; Methought
A christ'ning feast within your bower was held ;
But when the infant to the font was brought,
It prov'd a full-grown man in armour clad.

Aur. A full-grown man !* (*considering for a
moment, and then holding up her hands.*)

O blessing on thy dream !
From death to life restor'd is joyful birth.
It is, it is ! Come to my heart, sweet maid,

(*Embracing Viola.*)

A blessing on thyself and on thy sleep !
I feel a kindling life within me stir,
That doth assure me it has shadow'd forth
A joy that soon shall be.

Ter. So may it prove !
But trust not such vain fancies, nor appear
Too much elated ; for unhappy Ulrick
Swears that your Beacon, after this night's
watch,
Shall burn no more.

Aur. He does ! then will we have
A noble fire. This night our lofty blaze
Shall through the darkness shoot full many a
league

Its streamy rays, like to a bearded star
Preceding changeful — aye, and better times.
It may in very truth. O if his bark
(For many a bark within its widen'd reach
'The dark seas traverse) should our light descry !
Should this be so — it may ; perhaps it will.

O that it might ! — We'll have a rousing blaze !
Give me your hands. (*Taking Viola and Ter-
rentia gaily by the hands.*)

So lightly bounds my heart,
I could like midnight goblins round the flame
Unruly orgies hold. — Ha ! think ye not,
When to the font our mail-clad infant comes,
Ulrick will a right gracious gossip prove ?

Viol. Assuredly, so will his honour prompt.

Aur. Nay, rather say his pride. Methinks I
see him ;

His darken'd figure striding cross the hall,
While his high plume, that noddles to and fro,
Shews his perturb'd and restless courtesy.
Good, noble, happy wight ! Yet woe betide
The luckless hound that fawns on him that day !
His dismal yell disturbs the ceremony.
Ha, ha ! I needs must laugh.

Ter. Indeed you let your fancy wildly run,
And disappointment will but prove the sharper.

Aur. Talk not of disappointment ; be assur'd
Some late intelligence hath Ulrick prompted
To these stern orders. On our sea there sails,
Or soon will sail, some vessel, which right gladly
He would permit to founder on the coast,
Or miss its course. But no, it will not be :
In spite of all his hatred, to the shore,
Thro' seas as dark as subterraneous night,
It will arrive in safety.

Ter. Nay, sweet Aurora, feed not thus thy
wishes

With wild unlikely thoughts ; for Ulrick surely
No such intelligence hath had, and thou

But mak'st thy after-sorrow more acute
When these vain fancies fail.

Aur. And let them fail : tho' duller thoughts
succeed,

The bliss e'en of a moment still is bliss.

Viol. (to Ter.) Thou would'st not of her dew-
drops spoil the thorn,

Because her glory will not last till noon ;
Nor still the lightsome gambols of the colt,
Whose neck to-morrow's yoke will gall. Fye on't!
If this be wise, 'tis cruel.

Aur. Thanks, gentle Viola ; thou art ever kind.
We'll think to-morrow still hath good in store,
And make of this a blessing for to-day,
Tho' good Terentia there may chide us for it.

Ter. And thus a profitable life you'll lead,
Which hath no present time, but is made up
Entirely of to-morrows.

Aur. Well, taunt me as thou wilt, I'll worship
still

The blessed morrow, storehouse of all good
For wretched folks. They who lament to-day,
May then rejoice : they who in misery bend
E'en to the earth, be then in honour robed.
O ! who shall reckon what its brighten'd hours
May of returning joy contain ? To-morrow !
The blest to-morrow ! cheering, kind to-morrow !
I were a heathen not to worship thee.

(To Ter.) Frown not again ; we must not
wrangle now.

Ter. Thou dost such vain and foolish fancies
cherish,
Thou forcest me to seem unkind and stern.

Aur. Ah! be not stern. Edda will sing the
song
That makes feet beat and heads nod to its tune;
And even grave Terentia will be moved
To think of pleasant things.

SONG.

*Wish'd-for gales, the light vane veering,
Better dreams the dull night cheering,
Lighter heart the morning greeting,
Things of better omen meeting ;
Eyes each passing stranger watching,
Ears each feeble rumour catching,
Say he existeth still on earthly ground,
The absent will return, the long, long lost be found.*

*In the tower the ward-bell ringing,
In the court the carols singing,
Busy hands the gay board dressing,
Eager steps the threshold pressing,
Open'd arms in haste advancing,
Joyful looks thro' blind tears glancing,
The gladsome bounding of his aged hound,
Say he in truth is here, our long, long lost is found.*

*Hymned thanks and beadsmen praying,
With sheath'd sword the urchin playing,
Blazon'd hall with torches burning,
Cheerful morn in peace returning,
Converse sweet that strangely borrows
Present bliss from former sorrows ;
O who can tell each blessed sight and sound
That says, he with us bides, our long, long lost is
found.*

Aur. (who at first nods her head lightly to the measure, now bursts into tears, taking Edda's hands between hers, and pressing them gratefully.)

I thank thee : this shall be our daily song :
It cheers my heart, altho' these foolish tears
Seem to disgrace its sweetness.

Enter Page.

Viol. (to Aur.) Here comes your page with
lightly-bounding steps,
As if he brought good tidings.

Ed. Grant he may !

Aur. (eagerly.) What brings thee hither, boy ?

Page. (to Aur.) A noble stranger of the Le-
gate's train,
Come from the Holy Land, doth wait without,
Near to the garden gate, where I have left him ;
He begs to be admitted to your presence ;
Pleading for such indulgence as the friend
Of Ermingard, for so he bade me say.

Aur. The friend of Ermingard ! the Holy
Land !

*(Pausing for a moment, and then tossing up
her arms in ecstasy.)*

O God ! it is himself !

*(Runs eagerly some steps towards the garden,
then catching hold of Terentia, who follows
her.)*

My head is dizzy grown ; I cannot go.

Haste, lead him hither, boy.

(Waving her hand impatiently.)

Fly ; hear'st thou not ?

[EXIT Page.]

Ter. Be not so greatly mov'd. It is not
likely
This should be Ermingard. The boy has seen
him,
And would have known him. 'Tis belike some
friend.

Aur. No ; every thrilling fibre of my frame
Cries out " It is himself." (*Looking out.*)
He comes not yet : how strange ! how dull ! how
tardy !

Ter. Your page hath scarce had time to reach
the gate,
Tho' he hath run right quickly.

Aur. (*pausing and looking out.*)
He comes not yet. Ah ! if it be not he ;
My sinking heart misgives me.
O now he comes ! the size and air are his.

Ter. Not to my fancy ; there is no resem-
blance.

Aur. Nay, but there is : and see, he wears his
cloak

As he was wont to do ; and o'er his cap
The shading plume so hangs. — It is ! it is !

(*Enter Garcio ; and she, breaking from Te-
rentia, runs towards him.*)

My lost, my found, my blest ! conceal thee not.
(*Going to catch him in her arms, when
Garcio takes off his plumed cap, and bows
profoundly. She utters a faint cry, and
shrinks back.*)

Gar. Lady, I see this doff'd cap hath disco-
ver'd

A face less welcome than the one you look'd for.
Pardon a stranger's presence ; I've presumed
Thus to intrude, as friend of Ermingard,
Who bade me —

Aur. Bade thee ! is he then at hand ?

Gar. Ah, would he were !

'Twas in a hostile and a distant land
He did commit to me these precious tokens,
Desiring me to give them to Aurora,
And with them too his sad and last farewell.

Aur. And he is dead !

Gar. Nay, wring not thus your hands :
He was alive and well when he entrusted me
With what I now return.

(Offering her a small casket.)

Aur. Alive and well, and sends me back my
tokens !

Gar. He sent them back to thee as Ulrick's
wife ;

For such, forc'd by intelligence from hence
Of strong authority, he did believe thee ;
And in that fatal fight, which shortly follow'd,
He fought for death as shrewdly as for fame.
Fame he indeed hath earn'd.

Aur. But not the other ?
Ah, do not say he has ! Amongst the slain
His body was not found.

Gar. As we have learnt, the Knights of blest
St. John

Did from the field of dying and of wounded
Many convey, who in their house of charity
All care and solace had ; but with the names,

Recorded as within their walls receiv'd,
His is not found; therefore we must account him
With those who, shrouded in an unknown fate,
Are as the dead lamented, as the dead
For ever from our worldly care dismiss'd.

Aur. Lamented he shall be; but from my care
Dismiss'd as are the dead — that is impossible.

Ter. Nay, listen to advice so wise and needful:
It is the friend of Ermingard who says,
Let him within thy mind be as the dead.

Aur. My heart repels the thought; it cannot be.
No, till his corse, bereft of life, is found,
Till this is sworn, and prov'd, and witness'd to
me,

Within my breast he shall be living still.

Ter. Wilt thou yet vainly watch night after
night,

To guide his bark who never will return?

Aur. Who never will return! And thinkest
thou

To bear me down with such presumptuous words?

Heaven makes me strong against thee:

There is a Power above that calms the storm,

Restrains the mighty, gives the dead to life:

I will in humble faith my watch still keep;

Force only shall restrain me.

Gar. Force never shall, thou noble, ardent
spirit!

Thy gen'rous confidence would almost tempt me
To think it will be justified.

Aur. Ha! say'st thou so? A blessing rest
upon thee

For these most cheering words ! Some guardian
power
Whispers within thee. — No, we'll not despair.

Enter ULRICK.

Ul. (to Gar.) Your dismal mission is, I
trust, fulfill'd ;

Then, gentle Garcio, deem it not unkind
That I entreat you to retire ; for they
Who sorrow for the dead, love to be left
To grieve without constraint.

Aur. Thanks for your kind concern, most
noble Sir ;

And when we needs must sorrow for the dead,
We'll freely grieve without constraint. But
know,

Until our corse is found, we ring no knell.

If then your ear for funeral dirges long,
Go to some other bower ; hope still is here.

Ul. Ha ! still perversely bent ! what can con-
vince thee ?

This is distraction.

Aur. Be it what it may,

It owns not thy authority. Brave youth, (to Gar.)
I owe thy gentleness some kind acknowledg-
ment,

I'll find another time to give thee thanks.

[EXIT, followed by Viol. and Ed.]

Ul. Such hope is madness ! yield we to her
humour ?

No, she must be to sober reason brought,
By steady, firm controul.

Gar. Mean you by this, my Lord, a forc'd controul?

Ul. Who shall enquire my meaning?

Gar. The holy Legate, patron of th' oppress'd,
Will venture to enquire.

Ul. Aye, as his nephew, thou presumest, I see.

But know, bold youth, I am unused to threats.

Gar. Yet brook them as you may. I take
my leave. [EXIT.

Manent Ulrick and Terentia.

Ul. Did I not say these cursed meddling priests —

These men of meekness, wheresoe'er they come,
Would rule and power usurp? Woe worth the
hour

That brought them here! — And for this head-
strong maniac

As such, I will ——

Ter. Hush, hush! these precincts
quit.

It is not well, here to expose to view

Thy weak ungovern'd passions. Thou'rt ob-
serv'd;

Retire with me, where skreen'd from every eye,

With more possession of thy ruffled mind,

Thou may'st consider of thy wayward state.

[EXEUNT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *A flat Spot of Ground on the top of a Cliff, with broken craggy Rocks on each Side, and a large mass of Rock in the middle, on which a great Fire of Wood is burning ; a dark Sea in the back Ground : the Scene to receive no Light but from the Fire. Two Fishermen are discovered watching the Fire, and supplying it with Wood.*

SONG.

First Fisherman.

“ *HIGH is the tower, and the watch-dogs bay,
And the flitting owlets shriek ;
I see thee wave thy mantle grey,
But I cannot hear thee speak.*

“ *O, are they from the east or west
The tidings he bears to me ?
Or from the land that I love best,
From the knight of the north countree ?”*

*Swift down the winding stair she rush'd,
Like a gust of the summer wind ;
Her steps were light, her breath was hush'd,
And she dared not look behind.*

*She pass'd by stealth the narrow door,
The postern way also,
And thought each bush her robe that tore,
The grasp of a warding foe.*

*And she has climb'd the moat so steep,
With chilly dread and fear,
While th' evening fly humm'd dull and deep,
Like a wardman whisp'ring near.*

“ *Now, who art thou, thou Palmer tall,
Who beckonest so to me?
Art thou from that dear and distant hall?
Art thou from the north countree?”*

*He rais'd his hood with wary wile,
That cover'd his raven hair,
And a manlier face and a sweeter smile
Ne'er greeted lady fair.*

“ *My coal-black steed feeds in the brake,
Of gen'rous blood and true;
He'll soon the nearest frontier make,
Let they who list pursue.*

“ *Thy pale cheek shows an alter'd mind,
Thine eye the blinding tear;
Come not with me if aught behind
Is to thy heart more dear.*

“ *Thy sire and dame are in that hall,
Thy friend, thy mother's son;
Come not with me, if one o'them all
E'er lov'd thee as I have done.”*

*The lady mounted the coal-black steed,
Behind her knight I ween,
And they have pass'd thro' brake and mead,
And plain, and woodland green.*

*But hark, behind! the warders shout,
And the hasty larums ring ;
And the mingled sound of a gath'ring rout
The passing air doth bring.*

*“ O noble steed! now 'quit thee well,
And prove thy gen'rous kind!
That fearful sound doth louder swell,
It is not far behind.*

*“ The frontier's near — a span the plain,
Press on and do not fail!
Ah! on our steps fell horsemen gain,
I hear their ringing mail.”*

2d Fish. Tush, man! give o'er; thy ballads
have no end,
When thou art in the mood. I hear below
A sound of many voices on the shore :
Some boat, belike, forced by the drifting current
Upon the rocks, may be in jeopardy.

1st Fish. 'Tis all a mock to cut my ditty short.
Thou hast no mind to hear how it befel
That those two lovers were by kinsmen stern
O'erta'en; and how the knight, by armed foes
Beset, a bloody combat bravely held,
And was the while robb'd of his lady fair.
And how in Paynim land they met again.
How, as a Page disguised, she sought her knight,
Left on the field as lifeless. How she cheer'd
him ;
And how they married were, and home in
state ———

2d Fish. Ha' done, ha' done! a hundred times I've heard it.

My Grandam lull'd me with it on her lap
Full many a night; and as my father sat,
Mending his nets upon the beach, he sung it.
I would I knew my prayers as well.—But hark!
I hear a noise again. —

(Goes to the bottom of the stage, as if he were looking down to the sea.)

Along the shore
I see lights moving swiftly.
1st Fish. Some fishermen, who, later than the
rest,
Their crazy boat bring in; while, to the beach,
With flaming brands, their wives and children
run.
Rare sight, indeed, to take thy fancy so!

(Sings again.)

*No fish stir in our heaving net,
And the sky is dark, and the night is wet;
And we must ply the lusty oar,
For the tide is ebbing from the shore;
And sad are they whose faggots burn,
So kindly stored for our return.*

*Our boat is small and the tempest raves,
And nought is heard but the lashing waves,
And the sullen roar of the angry sea,
And the wild winds piping drearily;
Yet sea and tempest rise in vain,
We'll bless our blazing hearths again.*

*Push bravely, Mates! Our guiding star
Now from its towerlet streameth far;
And now along the nearing strand,
See, swiftly moves yon flaming brand:
Before the midnight watch is past,
We'll quaff our bowl and mock the blast.*

Bast. (without.)

Holla, good Mate! Thou who so bravely sing'st!
Come down, I pray thee.

1st Fish. Who art thou who call'st?

2d Fish. I know the voice; 'tis Sign'or Bastiani.

1st Fish. What! he, at such an hour, upon the cliff!

(Calling down.) I cannot come. If, from my station here,

This fire untended, I were found; good sooth!
I had as lief the luckless friar be,
Who spilt the Abbot's wine.

2d Fish. I'll go to him. [EXIT.

1st Fish. (muttering to himself.)

Aye; leave my watch, indeed! a rare entreaty!

Enter BASTIANI.

Bast. Wilt thou not go? A boat near to the shore,

In a most perilous state, calls for assistance:
Who is like thee, good Stephen, bold and skilful?

Haste to its aid, if there be pity in thee,
Or any Christian grace. I will, meantime,

Thy beacon watch ; and, should the lady come,
Excuse thy absence. Haste ; make no reply.

1st Fish. I will ; God help us all ! [EXIT.

Bast. Here is, indeed, a splendid noble fire
Left me in ward. It makes the darkness round,
To its fierce light oppos'd, seem thick and palp-
able,

And clos'd o'er head, like to the pitchy cope
Of some vast cavern. — Near at hand, me-
thinks,

Soft female voices speak : I'll to my station.

*(Retires from the front of the stage behind
the fire.)*

Enter AURORA, TERENTIA and VIOLA.

Viol. A rousing light ! Good Stephen hath
full well

Obeys'd your earnest bidding. — Fays and
witches

Might round its blaze their midnight revelry
Right fitly keep.

Ter. Aye ; thou lov'st wilds and
darkness,

And fire and storms, and things unsooth and
strange :

This suits thee well. Methinks, in gazing on it,
Thy face a witch-like eagerness assumes.

Viol. I'll be a goblin then, and round it
dance.

Did not Aurora say we thus should hold
This nightly vigil. Yea, such were her words.

Aur. They were light bubbles of some mantling thought,
That now is flat and spiritless ; and yet,
If thou art so inclin'd, ask not my leave,
Dance if thou wilt.

Viol. Nay, not alone, sweet sooth !
Witches, themselves, some fiend-like partners find.

Ter. And so may'st thou. Look yonder ;
near the flame
A crested figure stands. That is not Stephen.

Aur. (*eagerly.*) A crested figure ! Where ?
O call to it !

(*Bast. comes forward.*)

Ter. 'Tis Bastiani.

Aur. Aye ; 'tis Bastiani :
'Tis he, or any one ; 'tis ever thus ;
So is my fancy mock'd.

Bast. If I offend you, Madam, 'tis unwillingly.

Stephen has for a while gone to the beach,
To help some fishermen, who, as I guess,
Against the tide would force their boat to land.
He'll soon return ; meantime, I did entreat him
To let me watch his Beacon. Pardon me ;
I had not else intruded ; tho' full oft
I've clamber'd o'er these cliffs, ev'n at this
hour,
To see the ocean from its sabled breast
The flickering gleam of these bright flames return.

Aur. Make no excuse, I pray thee. I am told

By good Terentia thou dost wish me well,
Tho' Ulrick long has been thy friend. I know
A wanderer on the seas in early youth
Thou wast, and still can'st feel for all storm-
toss'd

On that rude element.

Bast. 'Tis true, fair Lady : I have been, ere now,

Where such a warning light, sent from the shore,

Had saved some precious lives ; which makes the task,

I now fulfil, more grateful.

Aur. How many leagues from shore may such a light

By the benighted mariner be seen ?

Bast. Some six or so, he will descry it faintly,
Like a small star, or hermit's taper, peering
From some cav'd rock that brows the dreary waste ;

Or like the lamp of some lone lazar-house,
Which through the silent night the traveller spies
Upon his doubtful way.

Viol. Fie on such images !

Thou should'st have liken'd it to things more seemly.

Thou might'st have said the peasant's evening fire

That from his upland cot, thro' winter's gloom,
What time his wife their evening meal prepares,

Blinks on the traveller's eye, and cheers his
heart ;

Or signal-torch, that from my Lady's bower
Tells wand'ring knights the revels are begun ;
Or blazing brand, that from the vintage-house
O' long October nights, thro' the still air
Looks rouzingly. ——— To have our gallant
Beacon

Ta'en for a lazar-house !

Bast. Well, Maiden, as thou wilt : thy gentle
Mistress

Of all these things may chuse what likes her best,
To paint more clearly how her noble fire
The distant seaman cheers, who bless the while
The hand that kindled it.

Aur. Shall I be bless'd ———

By wand'ring men returning to their homes ?
By those from shipwreck sav'd, again to cheer
Their wives, their friends, their kindred ? Bless'd
by those !

And shall it not a blessing call from heaven ?
It will ; my heart leaps at the very thought :
The seamen's blessing rests upon my head
To charm my wand'rer home. ———

Heap on more wood :

Let it more brightly blaze. — Good Bastiani,
Hie to thy task, and we'll assist thee gladly.

*(As they begin to occupy themselves with the
fire, the sound of distant voices, singing in
harmony, is heard under the stage as if
ascending the cliff.)*

Aur. What may it be ?

Viol. The songs of Paradise,
But that our savage rocks and gloomy night
So ill agree with peaceful soothing bliss.

Ter. No blessed spirits in these evil days
Hymn, thro' the stilly darkness, strains of
grace.

Aur. Nay list ; it comes again.

(Voices heard nearer.)

Ter. The mingled sound comes nearer, and
betrays
Voices of mortal men.

Viol. In such sweet harmony !
I never heard the like.

Aur. They must be good and holy who can
utter
Such heavenly sounds.

Bast. I've surely heard before
This solemn chorus chaunted by the knights,
The holy brothers of Jerusalem.
It is a carrol sung by them full oft,
When saved from peril dire of flood or field.

Aur. The Knights of blest St. John from Palestine !

Alas ! why feel I thus ? knowing too well
They cannot bring the tidings I would hear.

(Chorus rises again very near.)

Viol. List, list ! they've gain'd the summit of
the cliff :
They are at hand ; their voices are distinct ;
Yea, ev'n the words they sing.

(*A solemn Song or Hymn, sung in harmony,
heard without.*)

*Men preserv'd from storm and tide
And fire and battle raging wide ;
What shall subdue our steady faith,
Or of our heads a hair shall skathe ?
Men preserv'd in gladness weeping,
Praise him, who hath alway our souls in holy
keeping.*

*And wheresoe'er in earth or sea
Our spot of rest at last shall be ;
Our swords in many a glorious field,
Surviving heroes still shall wield,
While we our faithful toils are reaping
With him, who hath alway our souls in holy
keeping.*

(*Enter six Knights of St. John of Jerusalem
in procession, with their followers behind
them, who don't advance upon the stage, but
remain partly concealed behind the rocks.*)

Aur. Speak to them, Bastiani ; thou'rt a soldier ;
Thy mind is more composed. — I pray thee do.
(*Motioning Bast. to accost them.*)

Bast. This lady, noble Warriors, greets you all,
And offers you such hospitality
As this late hour and scanty means afford.
Wilt please ye round this blazing fire to rest ?
After such perilous tossing on the waves,
You needs must be forspent.

1st Knight. We thank you, Sir, and this most
noble dame,

Whose Beacon hath from shipwreck sav'd us.

Driven

By adverse winds too near your rocky coast,
Warn'd by its friendly light, we stood to sea :
But soon discov'ring that our crazy bark
Had sprung a dangerous leak, we took our boat
And made for shore. The nearest point of land
Beneath this cliff, with peril imminent,
By help of some good fishermen we gained ;
And here, in God's good mercy, safe we are
With grateful hearts.

Aur.

We praise that mercy also
Which hath preserv'd you.

1st Knight.

Lady, take our thanks.
And may the vessel of that friend beloved,
For whom you watch, as we have now been told,
Soon to your shore its welcome freight convey.

Aur. Thanks for the wish ; and may its
prayers be heard.

Renowned men ye are ; holy and brave ;
In every field of honour and of arms
Some of your noble brotherhood are found :
Perhaps the valiant knights I now behold,
Did on that luckless day against the Souldain
With brave De Villeneuve for the cross contend.
If this be so, you can, perhaps, inform me
Of one who in the battle fought, whose fate
Is still unknown.

1st Knight. None of us all, fair Dame, so ho-
nour'd were

As in that field to be, save this young knight.
Sir Bertram, wherefore, in thy mantle lapt,

Stand'st thou so far behind? Speak to him, Lady:
For in that battle he right nobly fought,
And may, belike, wot of the friend you mention'd.

Aur. (*going up eagerly to the young Knight.*)
Did'st thou there fight? — then surely thou
did'st know

The noble Ermingard, who from this isle
With valiant Conrad went: —

What fate had he upon that dismal day?

Young Kt. Whate'er his fate in that fell fight
might be,
He now is as the dead.

Aur. Is as the dead! ha! then he is not dead:
He's living still. O tell me — tell me this!
Say he is still alive; and tho' he breathe
In the foul pest-house; tho' a wretched wand'rer,
Wounded and maim'd; yea, tho' his noble form
With chains and stripes and slav'ry be disgraced,
Say he is living still, and I will bless thee.
Thou know'st — full well thou know'st, but wilt
not speak.

What means that heavy groan? For love of God,
speak to me!

(*Tears the mantle from his face, with which he
had concealed it.*)

My Ermingard! My blessed Ermingard!
Thy very living self restored again!
Why turn from me?

Er. Ah! call'st thou this restored?

Aur. Do I not grasp thy real living hand?
Dear, dear! — so dear! most dear! — my lost,
my found!

Thou turn'st and weep'st ; art thou not so to me ?

Er. Ah ! would I were ! alas, alas ! I'm lost : Sever'd from thee for ever.

Aur. How so ? What mean such words ?

Er. (*shaking his head, and pointing to the cross on his mantle.*)

Look on this emblem of a holy vow
Which binds and weds me to a heavenly love :
We are, my sweet Aurora, far divided ;
Our bliss is wreck'd for ever.

Aur. No ; thou art still alive, and that is bliss.
Few moments since, what would I not have sacrificed,

To know that in the lapse of many years
I should again behold thee ? — I had been ——
How strongly thou art moved ! — Thou heed'st me not.

Ter. (*to Aur.*) Were it not better he should leave this spot ?

Let me conduct him to my quiet bower.
Rest and retirement may compose his mind.

Aur. Aye, thou art right, Terentia.

Ter. (*to the other Knights.*) Noble Knights,
And these your followers ! gentle Bastiani
Will to a place of better comfort lead you,
Where ye shall find some hospitable cheer,
And couches for repose. — Have we your leave
That your companion be a little time
Ta'en from your company ?

1st Knight. You have, good Lady ;
Most readily we grant it. — Heaven be with you,

And this your lovely charge !

(*To Bast.*) Sir, to your guidance

We yield ourselves right gladly.

[*EXEUNT Knights, &c. by a path between the rocks, and Aurora and Ermingard, &c. by another path.*]

SCENE II.

An Anti-room in the House of AURORA : Enter GARCIO, beckoning the Page, who presently enters by the opposite side.

Gar. Come hither, little Friend, who did'st before

Serve me so willingly. Wilt thou from me
Bear to Sir Ermingard a friendly message ;
And say his old companion —

Page. Nay, I dare not.

The holy legate and the pope besides
Might not disturb him now ; for dame Terentia
Hath so decreed. He is in her apartment,
And yonder is the door.

(*Pointing off the stage.*)

Gar. From which ev'n now

I saw thee turn ?

Page. I listen'd not for harm.

Gar. Do I accuse thee, Boy ? Is he alone ?
Or is thy Lady with him ?

Page. That I know not.

Do folks groan heaviest when they are alone ?

Gar. Full oft' they do ; for then without re-
straint

They utter what they feel.

Page. Then, by my beard, I think he be alone!
For as I slipp'd on tiptoe to the door,
I heard him groan so deeply!

Gar. Thou heard'st him groan?

Page. Aye; deeply.
I thought when he return'd, we should be merry:
So starting up at the good tidings, quickly,
All darkling as I was, I don'd my cloaths:
But, by my beard! I'd go to bed again,
Did I not long most curiously to know
What will betide.

Gar. Speak softly, boy; thou, and thy beard
to boot,
Will badly fare if Ulrick should o'erhear thee.
I know his angry voice: he is at hand.

Page. Where shall I go? — He will not tarry
here:
He will but pass to the adjoining hall.
In this dark nook I'll hide me from his sight
Lest he should chide me.

(Retires behind the pillar.)

Gar. Is there room for me?
He'll greet me too with little courtesy
If I remain to front him.

(Retires behind the pillar also.)

Enter ULRICK and BASTIANI, speaking as they enter.

Ul. And still thou say'st, forbear!

Bast. Pass on, my Lord.

Ul. No, by the holy rood! I'll keep in sight

Of that accursed door which gave him entrance.
An hour's sand well hath run, which undisturb'd
They have in converse or endearments spent.
And yet I must forbear !

Bast. They have not told the truth who told
you so ;
It is not yet so long.

Ul. It is ! it is !
I have within these walls, who for my service
More faithfully have watch'd than Bastiani —
Aye, or Terentia either.

Bast. Wrong us not.
Since Ermingard returns by holy vows
So bound, that as a rival to your love,
You may, with honest thoughts of her you love,
No more consider him ; all jealousy
Within your noble breast should be extinct.
Then think not to disturb these few short mo-
ments

Of unavailing sorrow ; that were cruel.

Ul. Thou pitiest others well ; I am tormented,
And no one pities me. — That cursed Beacon !
I said in vain this night should be the last :
It was a night too much : the sea had now
Roll'd o'er his lifeless corse ; I been at peace.

Bast. For mercy, good my lord ! curb such
fell thoughts :
They bear no kindred to your better nature.

Ul. My better nature ! Mock me not with
words ;
Who loves like me, no nature hath but one,

And that so keen — Would the engulfing
waves

Had fifty fathom deep entombed him !

Bast. Speak not so loud : pass on ; we are
within

The observation of a prying household,
Pass on, and presently I'll bring you notice
Of what you would. I pray you, stop not here !

[*EXEUNT Ul. and Bast. while Gar. and Page
come from their concealment.*]

Page. He would have chid me shrewdly.

Gar. He is, indeed, an angry, ruthless man,
And Bastiani no slight task will have
To keep his wrath from mischief. To the legate
I'll hie me straight, and ask his better counsel :
So fare thee well, sweet child.

Page. Nay, take me with you ; I'm afraid to
stay.

I can my prayers and an Ave-Maria say,
The legate will not chide me.

Gar. Nay, stay behind ; thou art secure, poor
elf !

I'll soon return again.

[*EXEUNT.*]

SCENE III.

*The Apartment of TERENTIA : ERMINGARD and
AURORA are discovered with TERENTIA, who is
withdrawn to a distance from them. ERMIN-
GARD is seated with his body thrown back, and
his face covered with both his hands, while*

AURORA stands by him in the attitude of one who is entreating or soothing him.

Erm. O cease ! Thy words, thy voice, thy
 hand on mine,
 That touch so dearly felt, do but enhance
 An agony too great. — Untoward fate !
 Thus to have lost thee !

Aur. Say not, thou hast lost me.
 Heaven will subdue our minds, and we shall still,
 With what is spared as from our wreck of bliss,
 Be happy.

Erm. Most unblest, untoward fate !
 After that hapless battle, where in vain
 I courted death, I kept my name conceal'd.
 Ev'n brave De Villeneuve, master of our Order,
 When he received my vows, did pledge his faith
 Not to declare it. Thus I kept myself
 From all communication with these shores,
 Perversely forwarding my rival's will.
 O blind and credulous fool !

Aur. Nay, do not thus upbraid thyself :
 Heaven will'd it.
 Be not so keenly moved : there still is left
 What to the soul is dear. — We'll still be happy.

Erm. The chasten'd pilgrim o'er his lady's
 grave
 Sweet tears may shed, and may without reproach
 Thoughts of his past love blend with thoughts of
 heaven.

He whom the treach'ry of some faithless maid
 Hath robb'd of bliss, may, in the sturdy pride
 Of a wrong'd man, the galling ill endure ;

But sever'd thus from thee, so true, so noble,
 By vows that all the soul's devotion claim,
 It makes me feel — may God forgive the crime !
 A very hatred of all saintly things.
 Fool — rash and credulous fool ! to lose thee
 thus !

Aur. Nay, say not so : thou still art mine.
 Short while

I would have given my whole of life besides
 To've seen but once again thy passing form —
 Thy face — thine eyes turn'd on me for a mo-
 ment ;

Or only to have heard thro' the still air
 Thy voice distinctly call me, or the sound
 Of thy known steps upon my lonely floor :
 And shall I then, holding thy living hand
 In love and honour, say, thou art not mine ?

Erm. (*shaking his head.*) This state — this
 sacred badge !

Aur. O no ! that holy cross upon thy breast
 Throws such a charm of valorous sanctity
 O'er thy lov'd form : my thoughts do forward
 glance

To deeds of such high fame by thee achiev'd,
 That ev'n methinks the bliss of wedded love
 Less dear, less noble is, than such strong bonds
 As may, without reproach, unite us still.

Erm. O creature of a gen'rous constancy !
 Thou but the more distractest me ! Fool, fool !

(*Starting from his seat, and pacing to and
 fro distractedly.*)

Mean, misbelieving fool ! — I thought her false,

Cred'lous alone of evil — I have lost,
And have deserv'd to lose her.

Aur. Oh ! be not thus ! Have I no power to
soothe thee ?

See, good Terentia weeps, and fain would try
To speak thee comfort.

Ter. (*coming forward.*) Aye ; bethink thee
well,

Most noble Ermingard, heaven grants thee still
All that is truly precious of her love, —
Her true and dear regard.

Erm. Then heaven forgive my black ingrati-
tude,

For I am most unthankful !

Ter. Nay, consider,

Her heart is thine : you are in mind united.

Erm. United ! In the farthest nook o' th' earth
I may in lonely solitude reflect,
That in some spot — some happier land she lives
And thinks of me. Is this to be united ?

Aur. I cannot, in a Page's surtout clad,
Thy steps attend as other maids have done
To other Knights.

Erm. No, by the holy rood !

Thou canst not, and thou should'st not. Ra-
ther would I,

Dear as thou art, weep o'er thee in thy grave,
Than see thee so degraded.

Aur. Hear me out.

I cannot so attend thee — noon and eve
Thy near companion be ; but I have heard
That near the sacred houses of your Order,

Convents of maids devout in Holy Land
Establish'd are — maids who in deeds of charity
To pilgrims and to all in warfare maim'd,
In sacred warfare for the holy cross,
Are deem'd the humble partners of your zeal.

Erm. Aye, such there are; but what availeth
this?

Aur. There will I dwell, a vow'd and humble
sister.

We shall not far be sever'd. The same winds
That do o' nights thro' your still cloisters sigh,
Our quiet cells visiting with mournful harmony,
Shall lull my pillow too. Our window'd
towers

Shall sometimes shew me on the neighbouring
plains,

Amidst thy brave companions, thy mail'd form
Crested with glory, on thy pawing steed
Returning from the wars. And when at last
Thou art in sickness laid — who will forbid
The dear sad pleasure — like a holy bride
I'll by thy death-bed stand, and look to heaven,
Where all bless'd union is. O! at the thought,
Methinks this span of life to nothing shrinks,
And we are bless'd already. Thou art silent:
Dost thou despise my words?

Erm. O no! speak to me thus: say what thou
wilt:

I am subdued. And yet these bursting tears!
My heart is rent in twain: I fear — I fear
I am rebellious still.

(*Kneeling, and taking both her hands be-*

tween his, and kissing them with great devotion.)

School me or chide me now : do what thou wilt :
I am resign'd and humble.

Ter. (advancing to them with alarm.)

Hear ye that noise without ? — They force the
door,

And angry Ulrick comes.

Erm. (starting from his knees furiously.)

Thank heaven this hated rival front to front
Shall now oppose me ! God avenge the right !

*Enter ULRICK, bursting into the room, followed
by BASTIANI.*

Ul. (to Erm.) Vow'd, holy Knight ; from all
vain earthly love

Pure and divided ; in a lady's chamber
Do we surprise thee ? Quit it instantly :
It is a place for thee unfit : and know,
In sacred wardship will I keep that maid.

Erm. In sacred wardship ! O unblushing face !
What of thy baseness, treachery, and falsehood
I could declare, my choaking voice forbids,
Which utterance hath not. — Here's a ready
tongue — *(Drawing his sword.)*

Defend thee, then, and heaven defend the right !

(They both draw, and fight furiously, Bastiani endeavouring in vain to interpose ; when the Legate and his train, with Garcio and the Knights of St. John, enter, and separate them.)

Leg. Put up your weapons : to the holy church

This cause belongs, and to her high award
I charge you both that you in all humility
Submit. Lord Ulrick, to the Pope perforce
You must account of this your wardship give,
Or by yourself in person, or your deputy,
To Rome forthwith dispatch'd.

(Ul. bows sullenly.)

As for the lady, to my guardian care,
Till we before the holy Father come,
She must commit herself. And thou, Sir Erm-
ingard,
Shalt to the sovereign Pontiff and the patron
Of thy most valiant order, fully shew
Whercin thou'st been aggriev'd. If the bless'd
cross

Thou hast assum'd, supposing other vows
That did before engage thee, were annull'd,
By false reports deceived; the holy Urban,
Our wise enlighten'd father, will, I trust,
A dispensation grant, that shall empower thee
To do'ff with honour this thy sacred mantle,
And in its stead a bridegroom's robe assume.

(Ermingard and Aurora both embrace the
Legate's knees, who raises them up gently.)

It is enough; forbear, forbear, my children;
I am too richly thank'd.

And now we must with sober minds confer:
For when the wind is fair, we sail for Rome.
Some days, perhaps, it may adversely blow—
Perhaps some weeks; for I have known it oft
Hold vessels bound.

Aur. (*tossing up her arms joyfully as she speaks.*)

No; it will change to-morrow.

Erm. Dear ardent soul! canst thou command the winds?

(*Aur. shrinks back ashamed.*)

Leg. Blush not, sweet maid; nor check thy ardent thoughts;

That gen'rous, buoyant spirit is a power
Which in the virtuous mind doth all things
conquer.

It bears the hero on to arduous deeds:

It lifts the saint to heaven. (*Curtain drops.*)

THE END.

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